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Vol. I

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The Waifs of New York.

By N. S. WOOD (The Young American Actor).



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FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 and 36 North Moore Street, New York. Box 2730.

The Waifs of New York.

By N. S. WOOD (The Young American Actor).

Author of "The Diamond Island," "The Richest Boy in the World," "The Twenty Doctors; or, The Mystery of the Coast," "Edwin Forrest's Pupil; or, The Struggles and Triumphs of a Boy Actor," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIE THE WAIF—THE FRENCHMAN AND HIS VICTIM—WILLIE AND HANS.

"Now, zen, you leetle loafaire, how moche you got to-day?"

"Ten cents, Father Pierre."

"Only ten cents! *Mon Dieu!* You grow more lazy every day. *Sacre!* you drive me to the poor-house!"

"Yesterday I brought you in half a dollar."

"And to-day only ten cents. *Sacre!* that ees not good. I sall hate to take ze whip."

"Oh, don't, please don't, Father Pierre, don't whip me any more!"

"*Diable!* Zat is ze only way I make of you a good leetle girl."

"Oh, please don't!" cried the child, as the heavy whip descended on her bare shoulders.

Pierre Bertrand was a cruel Frenchman, a refugee of the Commune of Paris, who kept a low den near Baxter street, in the city of New York.

He was lazy, drunken and degraded, doing little work himself, but relying for his living upon the children whom he kept in his wretched den.

These poor waifs, whom he had picked up in one way and another, were forced to beg, sing or dance for pennies, pick up rags and other refuse, and even steal, that their cruel master might live in comfort.

Little Gerty, a child of scarcely seven years, was his chief source of income, being pretty and delicate, and having just the kind of face to excite the sympathy of strangers.

On the occasion in question, the close of a hot summer day, she had been forced to empty her pockets of the pennies she had gathered, and, much to Pierre's disgust, produced only ten cents.

He had whipped her before for not bringing in more money, and now he applied the same cruel remedy.

He had struck but one blow, when a boy of fifteen suddenly dashed down the stone steps leading to the miserable cellar where the brutal Frenchman lived.

Before Pierre could strike a second blow, the boy had snatched the whip from his hand, and had thrown himself in front of the child.

"You cowardly cur!" he hissed, "ain't yer 'shamed to strike a kid like that? Ye ought to get six months twice a year, that's what."

"Ah, my leetle Willie, eet ees you come back to fazez Pierre's, ees eet? How you do, my boy?"

"Yes, it's me, Willie Rufus, Esquire; but I ain't come back to yer old hole, though. I'm doin' business on my own hook now, and what I makes I keeps."

"Hein! You be a reech man some of zese days, Willie, I suppose."

"Bet yer life, Frenchy, and don't ye forgit it. Ye want to go slow with that whip, and if I hear of yer cutting Gerty with it ag'in I'll split on yer to the police."

"*Sacre!* You dare threaten me!" cried Pierre, a look of hate coming into his sinister face as he clenched his fist angrily.

He wore a full black beard and shaggy eye-brows, his forehead was low and square, he had a wicked black eye, a hooked nose, and a mouth every line of which denoted cruelty and cunning.

"Yes, I dare!" cried Willie, never flinching, "and when I says a thing I never crawls. I reads the papers I sells, and I know that you can be juggled if ye cuts up too rough with that kid."

"*Diable!* I haf ze right to do as I like wiz my own daughtaire!" growled the Frenchman.

"She ain't your daughter, any more'n she's mine. You stole her, you brute, and you're making money off her, just like you used to make it off o' me, afore I got spunk and run away."

"Ah, Willie, you was a ver' bad boy. I was glad to get rid of you."

"You won't let him whip me again, will you, Willie?" pleaded the child, clinging to the boy.

"Bet your boots I won't. Look here, Frenchy, there's yer whip, fur I don't want it," and Willie threw the whip on the floor, "but if I ever catch you licking Gerty again, I'll do you up, and the cops can't touch me for it, neither."

Willie Rufus, as he was called, was a bright, manly, tolerably good-looking, red-headed specimen of the New York street Arab, with rough ways, hard fists, and a heart of gold under his ragged coat.

He was a true knight of modern times, and thought the world of little Gerty, between whom and himself there was a bond of sympathy which nothing could sever.

Both were waifs, without home or friends, both had been thrown upon the cold world to shift for themselves, and both knew what it was to suffer hunger, thirst and cold.

Willie was a bootblack and newsboy combined. Sometimes plying one trade and sometimes the other, as occasion suited.

He had formerly lived in Pierre's den, but had lately left it and gone to live with a big-hearted Irish woman, who kept an apple stand in front of old Trinity.

He kept a watch upon Gerty, however, seeing her nearly every day, and protecting her from the rough street boys, who were fond of teasing her.

He had made up his mind long since that she was not Pierre's child, and resolved to find her parents if it were possible.

After giving Pierre the warning which he knew the cowardly Frenchman would not dare to neglect, he left the place and went off to earn some more money before closing business for the night.

The next day he was in the neighborhood of Castle Garden, blacking boots, when a number of emigrants came along, on their way to find lodgings in the great city.

Among them was an honest-looking German of middle age, with his daughter, a pretty girl, just the age of Willie himself.

"This way, my friend," said a loaferish-looking fellow, stepping up and trying to take the emigrant's bundle. "I can find you just the place you want. You speak English?"

"Ya, I spoke me dot English a leedle bit once," said the other.

"Ah, your name is Hans, isn't it?"

"Ya, Hans Schneiderkopf, I come von Chermanny mit my daughter, Katrina, to make me a living by Ny Yoriek, ain't it, Katrina?"

"Ya, I tink so neider," said the girl, showing her pearly teeth and dimpled chin.

"I learn me dot English langvitch by der ship ven I come across, and by der sailor mans in dot gasthouse, vot I keeps by Chermanny, and so I tinks I come ofer here und makes money, ain't it, Katrina?"

"Ya, I tink so neider," said Katrina, with a smile.

"Well, you come with me," interposed the man, "and I'll show you just the best chance in the world. My name's Barker, and I keep a hotel up

the street where you can live for nothing till you get a start."

"Lif for nodings? Dot vas sneap enough at hal-luf de price. I go mit you once."

Willie had heard the conversation and he now stepped in between Barker and his victim.

He knew Barker to be a sharper and a pal of Pierre Bertrand's, and was resolved that he would not get the best of the confiding emigrant.

"Look there, Dutchy, that feller is a regular skin and wants to rob you," he cried. "Don't you have nothing to do with him. He'll collar all your dust, run away with the gal, and chuck you in the river."

"Don't you mind what he says," growled Barker. "He's nohting but a tramp."

"Vat you say, leetle boy? Dot man run away mit my money and Kathrina?"

"Yes he will; and knock you on the head, too. He's a skin, a regular thief!"

"I'll pay you for that!" growled Barker, striking at Willie.

The latter parried the blow and struck Barker on the chin causing him to bite his lip.

"Get out of this, you loafer, or I'll do you up," cried the boy. "You'd better cheese it, anyway, for here comes a cop."

A policeman turned a corner at that moment, and Tom Barker, loafer and sharp, hurried away.

"What's the matter, Willie?" asked the officer, who knew our hero. "Didn't I see you strike somebody?"

"Yes, you did, Mr. Brown, and it was that sneak, Tom Barker, Pierre Bertrand's pal. He was trying to rope in this poor Dutchy."

"Vat you mean by dot? I don't saw some rope," said Hans.

"Cheat you, swindle you, that's what he means," exclaimed Officer Brown. "You may thank this boy that you were not robbed of all you have."

"Py shinger, dot vos been pad, I dinks, don't it, Katrina?"

"Ya, I tinks so neider," was all Katrina could say.

"You vos a good leedle poy, once, und I like to know your name. I don't forgot dot already."

"My name's Willie Rufus, and I lives on Baxter avenue. Send up yer card any time, and I'll be glad to show you round the city. I own it."

"You own dot big city!" cried the German, in great surprise.

"Yes, me and some other fellers."

"Dose oder vellers own de most, ain't it?" asked Hans, laughing.

"You bet. Well, Dutchy, I've got to skip, but you go with Mr. Brown and he'll show you a good place to stay, where you won't be robbed. Good-by, Kat," and Willie snatched a kiss from the girl's ruby lips.

"Ach! dot boy stole a kuss von my Katrina und call her a cat once," cried Hans, as Willie ran off laughing.

"That's the custom of the country," said the officer, "and you mustn't mind it. Come ahead, sir, and I'll find you a good boarding-house."

"Py shinger, dot poy was a leedle drump, und some day I bays him pack for dot goot durn he do me," said the honest German, and it was not very long before he kept his word.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANKER AND THE FRENCHMAN—MRS. MCSHANE
OVERHEARS IMPORTANT NEWS.

MR. HERBERT SINGLETON was a man of wealth and a banker to boot, doing business in Wall street and counting his dollars by the million. He was hard, stern, and crafty, shrewd at a bargain, and possessing no more conscience than he could conveniently get along with.

He had been in business for some years and was reckoned to be as clever at keeping money as he was in getting it, adding to his fortune year by year and never giving any of it away.

Mr. Singleton sat in his private office one day after banking hours, when a note was brought into him by one of the clerks.

"Sent by special messenger," said the young man, as he handed over a dirty yellow envelope.

"Thank you, James," said Singleton. "You are staying late to-day?"

"Yes, sir; I have some accounts to finish."

"You work pretty hard, don't you, James?"

"I try to do my duty, sir," said the young man, slightly coloring.

"You are single, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, at present, though I hope—"

"To get married, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, that will do."

Mr. James went out of the office, closing the door after him, and the banker opened the envelope, took out a half-sheet of dirty paper and read as follows:

"FRIEND SINGLETON.—Meet me in front of Trinity Church to-night at seven. I wish to see you on important business which concerns us both. PIERRE."

Mr. Singleton's brow grew dark as he read this epistle, and he tapped the floor nervously with his foot.

"What can he want of me?" he mused. "It is now five years since I saw him in Paris, just after the fall of the Commune. I must humor him, for he knows too much of that Pilot business to be made an enemy of."

Just as the clock on old Trinity was chiming the hour of seven that night, Mr. Herbert Singleton appeared in front of Trinity Church.

At the same moment a man stepped out of the grave-yard, walked through the iron gates of the main entrance and touched the banker on the shoulder.

"Aha, Meester Singleton, you are prompt in keeping your appointments."

The banker gave a start, while a look of disgust came into his face.

"Pierre Bertrand and in this attire?"

"Oui, oui, eet ees Pierre himself, your old friend, who ees ver' glad to shake you by ze hand again."

"Don't touch me!" cried the banker, drawing back. "How is this? You are dirty and ragged and your breath smells horribly of liquor. How come you to be in such a plight? What do you want of me?"

"Money!" said Pierre, shrugging his shoulders.

"I gave you a large sum of money five years ago in Paris. What have you done with it?"

"Squandered eet!" laughed Pierre. "It has gone in dice, cards, wine and oder tings—zat I will not mention. All ze same, eet has gone, Meester Singleton, and I must have more."

"You are insatiable."

"Not at all, *mon cher*, but I have ze misfortune to have ze habits of a gentleman, wiz ze income of a rag-picker, zat is the trouble," and Pierre laughed lightly.

"I will give you nothing," hissed the baker.

"Now, zen, I sall hafe to tell what I know of ze affairs of one Victor Pilot, of Paris, died—"

"Sh! some one may hear you, come into the churchyard."

"Zere is nobodee but ze old applewoman by ze railing and she is fast asleep. Ef ze bad leetle boys come along now, zey will steal all her fruit. How-evar, I will go wiz you."

The two men stepped into the churchyard, not far from the railings, and then Pierre said:

"You remember one Victor Pilot, of Paris, your friend, who died in ze bloody street of zat ceety, fighting for ze rights of ze people, leaving in your charge his leetle child?"

"Well, what of it?" said Singleton, haughtily.

"The child is dead."

"Ha, ha, so you think, Meester Singleton. You pay me money to kill ze shild, and zen you seize ze estates, zat was ver' clever, and if ze shild ees dead, you still have ze money, but if ze child is not dead—"

"But she is dead. You killed her yourself."

"No, I deed not. Ze schild is alive."

"Scoundrel!"

"Pardonne, *mon ami*, but you should not use bad words. Zey are like ovaire-loaded guns; they sometimes kick ze wrong way."

"You have acted dishonorably, sir."

"Hein! in ze matter of honair I think zere is leetle to choose between yon and me," said Pierre, laughing.

"Why did you not kill the girl as you promised?"

"I thought she would serve me better eef she was alive."

"She must be removed!" hissed Singleton.

"What does eet mattaire to you eef she is alive or dead, when you have zee propertee, *on ami*?" asked Pierre, with a shrug.

"She has an uncle in some part of the State, and if he ever hears of her being alive I shall lose everything."

"Ah!" muttered Pierre.

"You say you know where she is?"

"I can find her ze moment I want her. She run away from me six weeks ago, wiz a leetle ragamuffin named Willie, but I find her again."

"Do so, and bring me proofs that she is dead and I will give you two hundred dollars."

"It is a bargain!"

At this moment a boy came rushing into the yard crying:

"Extra news—all about the fire! Want a paper, boss?"

"No! Get out!" snapped Singleton.

"Want a shine?"

"No!"

"You need it bad, boss. Won't you let me shine yer boots?"

"No!"

"Ah, you might."

"No, I say!"

And the banker struck the boy across the breast with his cane.

"Be off, you impudent vagabond, or I'll have you locked up!"

"You'll pay for that blow," muttered Willie, as he stepped back. "I never done nothing to be struck fur. A feller what goes with that Frenchman ain't got much principle, though."

"Be off, you scoundrel, or I'll—"

"Ye do nothing at all to him!" exclaimed the Irish apple-woman, who had suddenly been awakened by the noise, and now came to Willie's rescue.

"Remember!" muttered Singleton, as he hurried away.

"Hallo, Frenchy!" said Willie. "You've got a new pardner, have you? He's better togged than you are, ain't he?"

"Aha, you leetle scoundrel, what you do wiz my shild, my leetle Gerty?" asked Pierre. "You steal her away from me, and I am so lonesome wizout ze leetle dear."

"She's where you won't get her, Frenchy," said Willie, "and don't you forget it."

"Diable, I like to put a knife in him," muttered Pierre, as he slunk off, leaving Willie with the Irish apple-woman.

"Gerty's all right, ain't she, Mrs. Mac?" asked Willie. "You won't let that dirty Frenchman get his paws on her, will you?"

"Deed, an' it's not Mollie MacShane that 'ud do that, Willie. Gerty is safe enough in me house, where you brought her, six weeks ago, and it's there you'll find her if you look."

"All right, Mrs. Mac. I'm down on my luck to-day, and I guess I'll go home."

"It's there I'll be coming myself in a little while," muttered Mrs. McShane.

Willie went off, and the good natured apple-woman returned to her stand, which was not well patronized at this hour, there being scarcely any one about.

She soon fell into a doze, and as she sat asleep a rough-looking fellow came along and stood looking at her.

"There she is," he muttered. "I wonder if the kid will come out to-night? If she does, I'll nab her and make Pierre pony up for restoring the lost child."

"How you do, my dear friend Tom Barkair—how you do?" said a voice, as a hand was laid on the man's shoulder.

"Hallo! Why, it's Pierre! Sh! Come away!" muttered Barker. "The old woman may wake up?"

"You look as though you want to speak with me," said Pierre.

"I do. I know where the kid is."

"Gerty?"

"Yes. She lives with this Irishwoman, and sometimes comes to meet her here. We can get her to-night if we look sharp."

"Do so, my friend, and I gif you a hundred dollars. Zat shild is in ze way of a friend of mine. Get rid of her and I gif you half what I get."

At this moment Mrs. McShane awoke from her nap.

"All right," said Barker. "We'll take the child up to my house, near the Harlem Railroad bridge, and drop her into the river."

"Good! At what time?"

"At half-past nine."

"Sh! Ze old woman wakes up!" muttered Pierre.

Both men hurried away in the direction of Rector street, down which they turned, and were lost to sight.

"I wondher phwat child they wor talking about?" muttered Mrs. McShane. "Why should they want to throw her into the river? Wan av those min was Tom Barker, the runner, and the ither—begorrah, the ither war the Frenchman. Oh, wurra, I hope that nothing's gone wrong with Gerty."

At this moment hurrying footsteps were heard, and Willie came running up, all out of breath.

"Is she here, Mrs. Mac?" he cried.

"Who do yez mean?"

"Gerty."

"She is not, faith."

"She left the house to come here just before I got there, and I hurried back as quick as I could."

"Oh, murther!" cried the poor woman. "Which way did yez come?"

"Morris street."

"And she always comes and goes be Rector street. Whist, Willie, till I tell yez something. Just now I overh'ard Tom Barker telling the Frenchman that he would be at his house up be the Harlem railroad bridge at half-past nine, and then they would throw her into the river."

"The child?" gasped Willie.

"That's phwat they said, though they didn't minton who it was."

"The villains have stolen Gerty, and are goin' to kill her, but you bet yer boots I'll stop 'em if I have to run all the way to Tom Barker's house near the railroad bridge at Harlem! Cricky, but that's a long way, and I haven't a nickel, but I'll get there if I die fur it."

Then off he shot, up Broadway like the wind, and was soon lost to sight.

"God bless him!" murmured the kind-hearted Irishwoman, "if he don't succeed nobody can, and may me blissing go wid him."

CHAPTER III.

WILLIE MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE—THE HOUSE AT THE BRIDGE—WILLIE'S ESCAPE AND DANGER.

A BOY of fifteen, in rough clothes and battered hat was speeding along the street as fast as his legs could carry him.

He was nearly out of breath, and the perspiration rolled off his forehead, his heart beating violently against his side.

Suddenly from around a corner came a jolly looking German, smoking a long bowled pipe, just as the boy reached the same point.

There was a collision at once, and the big German sat down on the sidewalk with considerable violence.

"Ach, himmell! mein stummich vas cut in two. Vat for you knock me down like dose, h'm?"

The boy had been upset as well as the German, and he now picked himself up, rubbed his elbows, looked at the other and said:

"Well, I'll be blowed if it ain't the Dutchman! Don't yer know me, Hans?"

"Chiminy Grismas, off dot poy ain't dot little Willie some more! Where you vas been so long?"

"Oh, I've been knocking around the city. Where have you been?"

"I was knock dot city around myselluf. I found me a place off business, and I vas oben next week."

"Open next week?"

"Ya. I was oben dot beer saloon next week. Come around und I dreat you once. Dot was down mit Vest Broadvay, near dot Canal."

"West Broadway, near Canal street?"

"Ya, dot vas him."

"Well, I'll come around and— Oh, dear! I forgot what ' was going for," he suddenly cried, interrupting himself. "Hans, can you lend me a quarter?"

"Could I lent you a quarter? Ya, Willie, I could lent you more as dot, off you want it."

"Then lemme have it. I'll pay you to-morrow. I must get up to the Harlem Railroad before half past nine. It's a case o' life an' death, that's what it is."

"Vell, it vas eight o'clock already. How far vas dat Harlem pridge?"

"Six or seven miles, way up to t'other end of the city."

"How you was went, in dose horse-cars or mit a kerridge?"

"The cars are good enough. I've got time enough for that. I ain't high-toned enough to ride in a hack."

"Vell, I was always ready to do a goot durn by you. I don't forgot vat you done for me once ven I forst come to dis country by Castle Garden."

Hans then handed Willie a silver half dollar, and the boy, uttering his hasty thanks, was off like a shot.

"I wouldn't miss those two duffers for a farm," he muttered. "They won't kill Gerty if I can stop it."

It was after nine o'clock when Willie hurried along a narrow lane toward the railroad bridge over the Harlem river, having made the closest connection.

"The old house near the bridge," he muttered. "I don't know the place, but I spect I kin find it. It's getting on to half-past nine now, and they ought to be coming pretty soon."

At that moment he heard the sound of wheels behind him, and he stepped aside to let the vehicle, whatever it was, pass him.

It proved to be a box-wagon with two men on the seat, carrying a bundle between them.

"Most time now," said one man, as they drove by. "You think he will be there?"

"Surely, my good friend, he will not mees it."

"Great guns! it's Tom Barker and Pierre," muttered Willie, "and that's Gerty they've got on the seat. I'll be blowed if I ain't in luck."

The wagon drove on at a pretty good gait, but Willie kept up with it, as it would never do to lose it now.

Presently it stopped in front of a wretched-looking two-story house not far from the railroad track and close to the bank of the river.

Standing back among the shadows, Willie watched the men alight from the wagon, and then, while one led the horse off to a shed, the other went indoors with a bundle in his arms.

"I must get inter that shanty some way or 'nother and steal Gerty away from those blokes. It'll be a close shave, but I'm takin' all my chances."

The men had both entered the house, and Willie was about to follow when he heard a quick foot-step approaching. He dropped to the ground in an instant, and as the man passed, wormed himself along the ground like a snake.

A light suddenly appeared at one of the upper windows of the house, upon seeing which the stranger muttered:

"Ah! he is here, and on time."

Then he entered the open door, passed along the darkened hallway, and disappeared.

A moment later he was followed noiselessly by Willie Rufus, the waif.

"That's the feller that struck me to-night," he hissed. "If he takes a hand in this, I'll smash his snoot."

The man passed along the hall, gave a whistle, was answered and went up-stairs, where he found two men sitting at a table on which stood a lighted candle.

Over in one corner, near a window, lay a bundle on the floor, covered with an old shawl.

"You are on time?" said the man.

"Out, out, Meester Singleton, I am on time as I tell you I haf brought a pal wiz me, to help in ze work."

"You mean a witness!" muttered the other.

"As you please," returned Pierre, with his customary shrug.

"You have brought the child?"

"She is ovaire here, you salf see her, to be sure of eet. Behold!"

Pierre took the light, raised a corner of the old shawl, and disclosed the face of little Gerty.

"Zis is ze right shild," muttered Pierre, "ze daughtaire of your friend, Victor Pilot, whose estates you haf taken, and zis is ze shild for which you gif me two hundred dollars to pitch into ze rivalre."

"There is no necessity to repeat all that," muttered Singleton. "Here is your money. See that the child never appears again."

So saying, he handed Pierre a package of bank-notes, and hurriedly left the room.

"We've got the dust, now let's whack up with it," said Barker, "and then get rid of the kid. The chloroform we gave her will keep her quiet for a time."

Willie Rufus had overheard the whole wicked transaction, and now stood in the hall without in his stocking feet, his shoes hanging around his neck by their laces.

"You salf have your share, my dear Tom," said Pierre. "We vill count him now."

They drew two chairs up to the table, side by side, and sat down with their backs to the window.

Pierre began counting out the money, Tom watching the process with great interest, and keeping a careful lookout to see that no more money went on Pierre's pile than on his own.

With cat-like tread, scarcely daring to breathe, and watching well where he placed his feet, that no creaking boards might betray him, Willie Rufus crept along behind the two men, toward the corner where the child lay unconscious.

Pierre and Tom were too much absorbed in the money before them to hear the soft tread behind them.

Willie reached the child, lifted the bundle care-

fully from the floor, and stole back toward the door.

Creak!

He had stepped on a loose board in his haste.

Pierre turned quickly at the sound, but at the same instant Willie sent a strong puff toward the candle and put it out.

In another instant he was flying down-stairs with his precious bundle in his arms, leaving the two scoundrels in the dark.

They stumbled against one another in the effort to catch the fugitive, and much valuable time was lost.

Tom Barker groped to the window, tore down the flimsy curtain and pushed up the sash.

Outside all the scene was bathed in moonlight.

"There he goes!" he shouted, pointing to a flying figure on the railroad bridge, hurrying over to the New York shore.

"Ze leetle scoundrel!" hissed Pierre. "He haf ze shild. He must not get away."

Both men now hurried down-stairs and toward the bridge.

Willie was nearly half way across, his figure standing out in bold relief against the sky.

Suddenly a rushing sound was heard, and Tom dragged Pierre from the track.

"The Boston express, due at the Grand Central at ten o'clock!" he shouted.

In another instant the train had rushed by them and was speeding across the bridge.

Willie, thinking only of escape, had taken to the bridge as the quickest way of distancing his pursuers.

His path lay straight before him, and he could not go astray or be cornered, as might happen if he trusted to the streets.

Suddenly, as he dashed on, he heard the thunder of a train behind him.

One quick glance showed him the head-light directly behind him, the rails beginning to glisten already in the glare.

The train was upon the same track with himself!

The bridge was double-tracked, and it was but the work of a few moments to cross to the other track.

Hardly had he done so before the shriek of another locomotive was heard, and the glare of another headlight was thrown along the track.

A train was coming from the city at the same moment that the Boston express was running toward it.

Both trains would be upon the bridge at the same time!

Willie's blood nearly froze in his veins.

All his efforts would prove in vain, and his young life be dashed out under the hoofs of the iron horse.

"It's a close shave," he muttered between his firmly-set teeth, "but I ain't dead yet."

There was but little time to act, and every moment was precious.

Grasping the unconscious child firmly with one arm, he hurried to the outer edge of the track, swung himself off, and hung with the other arm to the end of one of the sleepers.

He had hardly done so before both trains went thundering by with the speed of the wind.

CHAPTER IV.

WILLIE'S RETURN—MRS. MCSHANE'S WELCOME—THE DETECTIVE AND HIS PROMISE—PROSPECTS.

THE two trains went thundering across the bridge while Willie, the waif, hung tightly to the sleeper.

He thought once that he would beshaken off, and clung with all his might to his support.

Once he struck the water, with his unconscious burden in his arms, he would be carried down the river and exposed to countless dangers.

He held on, however, with all his might, and in a few moments the trains had passed.

"I'm mighty glad of that," he muttered, as he drew himself up, "for I couldn't have stood much more o' that sort o' business."

Just then the child in his arms recovered and uttered a cry of alarm, at the same time struggling to get free.

"Hold on, Gerty, it's me that's got you," cried the lad. "I ain't going to hurt you, if I know it."

"Where have the bad men gone who stole me away from aunty?" asked the child.

"They won't hurt you, Gerty, not if I know it. Here, can you climb up to the railroad track?"

"Oh, Willie, I am afraid!" said the child, hugging him tighter.

"You'll have to do it, Gerty, if you don't want to fall in the river. My arm's most broke now."

"Oh, I'll do anything to help you, Willie," and seizing the sleeper, she climbed up, assisted by the boy, and stood on the track.

Willie then pulled himself up, and, taking Ger-

ty's hand, hurried over to the New York side of the river.

"Them blokes think I'm dead, I reckon, and I'd just as lieves they would for the present," he mused, as he walked slowly along. "Golly! but how my arm burns. Bet if I'd hung there much longer it would ha' snapped in two."

"Are we far away from home, from Mrs. McShane's, Willie?" asked Gerty in a few minutes.

"Are we far away! Well, I should wink! The whole length of New York, pretty near, lies between us. Never you mind, though, we'll get there. I say, Gerty, how did you come to be stolen?"

"Why, I was coming up Rector street, and I had almost reached the corner of Broadway,

when two men, one of them that horrible Pierre, ran up to me, caught hold of me, and ran away."

"Why didn't yer holler, sis? Mrs. Mac would ha' heard yer."

"Oh, I didn't have time to say a word. First I was too frightened, and then they put something over my face, and I fainted dead away."

"Well, they won't get you again, I'll bet my shoes, and if I catch Frenchy loafing around, I'll give him a fit of sickness."

"He's a bad, wicked man, Willie, and so is the other."

"Well, now you're shoutin'. I put a spoke in Tom Barker's wheel once before, and I'll do it again for two pins. It was mighty lucky I met that Dutchman to-night. If I hadn't, I'd have never got there, and you'd ha' been going down the river."

"And you saved my life, didn't you, Willie?"

"Yes, I did, and I'll do it again."

"You're a real good boy, Willie, and I love you ever so much!" cried the child, impulsively.

"Yum! yum! Don't I wish you was a big girl and said that to me," retorted Willie, smacking his lips. "Never mind, Gerty, wait till you grow up, and then if you love me just the same I'll marry you sure as guns."

By this time they had reached Third avenue and Willie got aboard a car and started for home.

It was a long ride, but Gerty fell asleep soon after the car started, so that she had nothing to worry her.

Willie thought that possibly the villains had witnessed his escape, and were even now following him up, and it was a long time before he could get it out of his head.

It was twelve o'clock and after when he reached Mrs. McShane's and found that good lady waiting for him.

"Begorrah, it's glad I am to see yez, me bye, and Gerty too, alanna," she cried, hugging them both. "Faith, I couldn't have been any sorrier if ye'd been me own children if anything had happened yez, for God knows I loves ye both with all my heart. What kept ye so late, anyhow?"

"Why, I've been all the way up to Harlem and back."

"Sure, I thought ye'd been to Jersey, be the time yez took. Come into the kitchen and get your suppers, for I know you've had nothing since noon. I've got ivereverything hot for ye and—"

Just then there came a knock at the door, and the kind-hearted apple woman gave a little scream.

"Begob, here comes the vilyans afther ye now," she muttered. "Run into the kitchen and hide, Gerty, and, Willie, do yez get up the chimney."

"Ah, what yer scared of?" said Willie. "D'ye think them blokes would dare to come here? If dey did, I'd smash 'em."

Then Willie opened the door, and saw a young man in plain clothes standing in the hall.

"Why, it's Johnny Jordan, the fly cop, what shadders round Trinit Church and de banks in Wall street," cried the

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Jordan? Faix I'm glad to see yez again, and to tell ye that the childher are safe and sound!" cried the old lady.

"Trying to mash the ole woman, are you, Johnny?" cried Willie, with a laugh. "Coming to see her at twelve o'clock, eh? Oh, ain't yer shamed? A young feller like you, too?"

"Troth, I tould Murphy, the polisman, to give the alarrum whin ye wint off, and then I see Misher Jordan, the detective, going home and I pit him on the thrail, too, and I'm no sure, if yez hadn't come home but I'd have had the hull polis force av the city luckin' for yez."

Willie knew Jordan, the detective, having made his acquaintance by that strange instinct all street boys have, which enables them to tell a policeman no matter in what dress he may appear.

"I'm glad you're home again, Willie," he said, "and if you want to make a complaint, I'll have the fellows arrested to-day," the detective said, when Willie had briefly related his adventures.

"No, never mind, Johnny," answered Willie. "If I was to do anything now, those fellers would get back on me through Gerty, and I wouldn't have that happen for the City o' New York. Leave it to me, Johnny, and I'll get hunk on 'em."

"You seem to take a great interest in the child, Willie."

"You can bet your shoe laces I do, Johnny, and when she's old enough I'm going to marry her."

"She isn't anything to Pierre, is she?"

"Related to him!" echoed Willie, in disgust. "No. She ain't. She's got relatives somewhere, though, and I'm going to look 'em up. Just now she's a waif, just like myself. I say, Johnny, what is a waif, anyhow?"

"A waif is a person without home or friends, a castaway on the ocean of life," returned the detective.

"Well, that's what we are, both of us. Ain't we, Gerty?" said Willie, taking the child on his knee and kissing her. "We're just two orphans, we are, but—"

"Now jist shtop talkin' that way at all," interrupted Mrs. McShane. "Sure I'm a mother to ye both, and Mr. Jordan will be a father, I know, faith."

"Then he'll have to be hitched to you, mother Mac. Hi-hil won't that be, bully?" cried Willie. "How would you like to marry de ole woman, Johnny?"

"Ah, go an' neow, wid yer jokes," cried the apple-woman, her cheeks turning as red as her head. "Sure Mither Jordan can foind manny a younger woman widout lookin' at me, faith."

"I don't know where I would find a better one, Mrs. McShane," said Jordan, gallantly.

"Oho, Mrs. Mac, he's giving you sugar," piped up Willie.

"It's very kind av yez to say so, be gob," muttered the Irishwoman, dropping a courtesy and looking mightily pleased. "Won't yez shtay and have a cup of tay wid us?"

"No, I thank you, Mrs. McShane. I must return to the office. Any time you need my assistance, Willie, drop in on me or send me a line, and I'll do all I can for you."

"All right, Johnny, I'll think of it."

The detective then took his departure, and Mrs. McShane brought out the supper which had been waiting so long to be eaten.

"Av that dirty Frenchman was to shtick in his head now I'd smash his nose with a taycup," muttered the apple-woman.

"Willie won't let him touch me will you, Willie?" murmured Gerty, putting her hand in her companion's.

"Will I? Well, I'd just like to see myself if I did. I'd kick myself all around Trinity Church and back again. You want to lay low, though, and not show yourself, for as long as them blokes think you're dead you're safe from them."

"Yer said ye war going to foind the choild's parents," interposed Mrs. McShane. "How will ye do it, faith?"

"In the papers."

"Foind them in the papers! Sure they're not rowled up in paper like a bar av soap, are they?"

"No, no; o' course not. I'll put an advertisement in the papers and find them that way."

"Oho, that's it, is it. Well, who are yez going to write to?"

"The relations of Gerty—. Oh, I say Gerty—what's your other name?"

"I don't believe I ever had any," returned the child, simply.

"Oh, Jinks! now I am up a stump. Lemme see, what name was that what the Frenchman said? Bother, I can't remember it after all the rush. Plague take it, I can't do nuthin' till I find that out. Never mind, I'll get on it some day, and then I'll stick a card in the Herald or Sun and find out all I want to know. I don't read the papers for nuthin' you can bet."

"Begorra, is it shtayin' up all night ye want to be!" cried Mrs. McShane. "If ye're goin' to get up to buy the mornin' papers, it's toime ye got to bed or ye'll oversleep yesilf intoirely."

"Right you are, Mrs. Mac, as you always is. Good-night. Good-night, Gerty, and don't forget to dream of Willie Rufus, will you?"

"Oh, no, I'll dream a lot," cried Gerty, as Willie kissed her.

"Go on, now, ye red-headed thramp, an' don't be puttin' nonsense into the child's head," cried the motherly old woman with assumed severity.

Willie threw a kiss at her by way of reply and ran off, and before long the occupants of the McShane apartments were all wrapped in peaceful slumber.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRETTY SEWING GIRL—SINGLETON TRIES TO MAKE A CONQUEST—PIERRE GETS A JOB.

WHIRR, whirr, whirr!

All day long, from early morning till evening, and sometimes at night, the sound of that busy wheel could be heard.

The people in the lower floors of the big tenement did not mind it, either, for a song often accompanied it, and it was a real treat to hear the sweet voice of the pretty sewing girl accompanying the buzzing wheel.

Often, too, a canary, yellow-breasted and prim, would join in the song, and then the tenants below would long to have a peep into that little upper room, where they knew the sun must shine brighter than anywhere else.

The pretty sewing girl went out now and then to get her meals or take a walk, and there were always plenty to give her a kindly greeting, for even those who knew her by sight were glad to get a smile from her pretty lips.

So the sewing-machine rattled on, the bird whistled, and the girl sang from day to day, and all seemed as merry as so many crickets.

There were flower-pots in the young girl's window, and vines climbed up the sash, and sometimes, when her door was left open, the other tenants could get a glimpse into her room, which they declared to be the most cozy, cheerful little place they had ever seen.

One afternoon in the early autumn Miss Alice, as she was known, was busy driving the big wheel of her sewing machine, when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" she cried, stopping the machine.

The landlady entered with a letter in her hand.

"It's another letter, Miss Alice, and a happy man he must be that can have the privilege of writing to you."

"Give it to me, please, Mrs. Thomas," said Alice, blushing and holding out her hand.

"I wouldn't wonder now if it was from your sweetheart, Miss Alice?" pursued the landlady, handing over the letter, "and that some day you'll be getting married and leaving us?"

"Perhaps," said Alice, blushing again, while she cut open the envelope with the scissors.

"He must be a good man, then, or you wouldn't have anything to do with him, though that isn't always the case, for there's my husband, the old scamp, that I just doted on, and he has to go and run away and leave me, the villain, and I a-slaving like anything to make a living by taking lodgers. I'm sure I deserved a better fate, and so do you, Miss Alice, and—Why, it's only half a sheet, isn't it? Bless me, my letters used to be three or four sheets; but then long letters don't always prove a man's goodness, do they, Miss Alice?"

"I beg your pardon," cried Alice, with a start, and putting the letter under her neat apron.

"I said that short letters—no, that long letters weren't always—that is, I mean—well, good afternoon, Miss Alice," and the talkative Mrs. Thomas bounced out of the room, suddenly discovering that she was not wanted.

"Do you want to hear the letter, Dick?" asked Alice, arising from her work and going over to the window where the bird swung in his gilded cage. "Well, you shall, if you will sing to me afterward. Just listen, Dick."

DEAR ALICE:—Meet me in Trinity Churchyard at six. I have something important to say to you. Good-bye dearest, from your own HARRY.

"There, isn't that a nice letter, Dick? There isn't much to it, but it's as nice as can be," and Alice kissed the short note and read it over again to herself.

Dick, pleased at the attention bestowed upon him, began to sing with all his might, while Alice bestirred herself, so as to finish her work and meet her lover at the appointed time.

"Dear Harry," she mused, "some day if he works faithfully he may be the president of a bank of his own and then I shall be rich and enjoy the beautiful things of this life as I used to. Harry's employer is a hard man, he tells me, but I don't see how he can help liking one who works so diligently. He must be hard to suit."

Then, folding and putting away her letter, Miss Alice renewed her work and soon the whirr-whirr of the sewing machine, the clear notes of the bird and the sweet song of the young seamstress could be heard blending together, and the tenants below knew that Alice was happy and were glad of it.

Harry James, the confidential clerk of Singleton the banker, had met Miss Alice at his mother's, had fallen in love with her at first sight, and had soon induced her to return his suit.

He was not rich, but he held a good position, had no bad habits and could support a wife such as Alice would make, as she was prudent and

saving, not extravagant, as too many in moderate circumstance are apt to be.

It was not yet six o'clock when Alice appeared in front of Trinity Church and stepped inside, looking around for her lover.

He was not in sight, and she took a seat on one of the benches inside the iron railing.

Just at that moment a man came out of the church and caught sight of her sitting there on the bench.

He seemed struck by her appearance, for he paused, looked at her a few moments, and then tipped his hat.

He was Herbert Singleton, the rich banker, Harry James' employer, but Alice did not know that.

Alice colored, turned away her head and looked up and down the street to see if Harry were in sight.

"By Jove! what a pretty girl!" muttered Singleton, under his breath. "I wonder if I could win her? By Heaven! I must and shall!"

Then he took a seat by the side of Alice, on the bench, and said:

"This is a strange place for a pretty girl to sit. Aren't you afraid of being insulted?"

"This is the first time, sir!" said Alice, sternly, as she arose.

Singleton caught her hand quickly, kissed it, and said:

"You're the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life. Will you be my wife? I'll give you more money than you ever saw before if you'll only say the word."

"Release me!" cried Alice, pulling her hand away. "Leave me at once, or I will call the police."

Then she tried to leave the place, but Singleton stood in front of her and prevented this move.

There were people passing and repassing all the time, but none seemed to notice the young girl or her persecutor in their hurry.

Alice ran into the church, and Singleton, with a wicked smile on his lips, took a seat near the gate, lighted a cigar and smoked away nonchalantly.

Six o'clock struck from the spire above his head and at the same moment he heard a voice say in his ear:

"Ah, Meestaire Singleton, I am ver' glad to see you once more. You are looking well and feel so, I trust?"

"H'm, it's you, is it, Pierre?" muttered Singleton. "What do want?"

"Nossing, *mon ami*, nossing."

At this instant Singleton saw the young girl leave the church, cross the street and hurry down Wall street.

"Follow that girl, find out who she is, where she lives and all about her," said the banker, quickly, "and I'll give you a hundred dollars."

"Excellent, *mon ami*, excellent!" cried Pierre. "You haf vat ze bad leetle boys call ze mash. Aha, Meestaire Singleton, you are vun great rascal," and Pierre laughed wickedly.

"Follow her, you fool!" hissed Singleton, "or you will lose her. Remember, one hundred dollars for your information!"

"*Oui oui*, I remembre," and Pierre shuffled lazily away, being presently lost in the crowd.

"I'll have her if it costs me a fortune!" hissed the scoundrel as he left the church, a strange place for the plotting of a scheme as base as that which was now in his mind, "and Pierre is just the right sort of a man to help me."

"Shine!" cried a boy directly in front of him.

"No! and if you bother me again I'll have you arrested," snarled the man, as he struck the lad with his stick and hurried on.

The lad was Willie Rufus, and as Singleton passed on he muttered to himself:

"That's the same feller that struck me once before, and right here, too. It's him that hired Frenchy and Tom Barker to get rid of Gerty, too. I'm onto his nibs like a ton o' coal, and if I don't get hunk with him some day my name is Mud. If any feller wants to be hauled in it's him, and not Frenchy, for he's the boss, and Pierre is on'y the feller what does the work."

Thus musing, Willie watched the banker out of sight, and then hurried along till he reached the church.

Mrs. McShane had finished business for the day, and her apple-stand was closed and locked.

"Shine?" he cried, as he entered the gate.

A young gentleman and lady were sitting on one of the benches conversing earnestly.

"Hi! Shine?" asked Willie, stepping directly in front of the couple.

"No," said the young man, who was Harry James, Singleton's clerk.

He had met Alice hurrying down Wall street, and had returned to the church with her. She had told him of her adventure, and he had felt

justly indignant, not knowing that the man who had insulted her was his own employer.

"Shine!" cried Willie.

"No," said Harry, shortly.

"You need it," said Willie, saucily. "Nice suit o' clothes, high dicer, bang up fall overcoat, good gloves, and—dirty shoes!" with a pause to give more effect to the words.

"You deserve a job for your penetration," said Harry, with a laugh. "Here, give me a good shine. What is your name?"

"Well, de boys 'round in Greenwich street calls me Red-headed Bill, but my right name, the one I puts on my cards, is Willie Rufus, Esquire. Come and see me some day. I live high, I do."

"Do you?"

"Yes, away up, the fifteenth story of an Irish flat."

"Do you expect to make a living blacking boots?"

"Bet your life," said Willie, polishing away. "Why, I'm going to be president one of these days."

"You are?"

"I are, and don't you forget it. Oh, I'm looking high, I am."

"You'll give me a good position, won't you?" said Harry, quizzingly.

"Well, I guess! I'll make you inspector of ash-barrels. There's money in that. Say, is the young lady your sister?"

"No, she is Miss Alice Baldwin, my sweetheart."

"Oho! that's it, is it? Well, have you got a sister?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll marry her and then I'll be your brother-in-law, and I can give you a better position, don't ye see? Relations has the best pull these days."

"Well, my boy, you seem bright enough to do something better than blacking boots," said Harry, tossing Willie a nickel as he finished his work.

"Oh, I do; I sell papers."

"Do you ever read them?"

"Bet your life! That's how I find out things. I would like to do 'uthin' better, though, fur a fac'. Do you suppose you could gimme a lift if I wanted to, real hard?"

"Can't you help him, Harry?" asked Alice, in a whisper. "He seems like a good boy, if he is a trifle rough and unpolished."

"Here is my card, Master Willie Rufus," said Harry James, taking a card from his pocket-book and handing it to Willie. "Come and see me whenever you feel like it and I'll see what I can do for you."

"Thank ye, Mr. Harry James, No. 69 Wall street, I'll come down some day and surprise you. Tra-la-la, partner. Don't forget to give your sister a good account o' me. Good-night, Miss Alice. See you later."

Then the saucy little fellow ran away and went up Broadway toward the City Hall park in quest of shines.

Near the corner of Fulton street he met Pierre, who started back in surprise at seeing him.

"Hallo, Frenchy! where have you been these six weeks? I thought you must be on the Island."

"Aha! why, zis ees leetle Willie, as I leave. I thought you was run ovaire by ze cars."

"Well, I wasn't, old Bullfrogs, and neither was Gerty, either—no thanks to you, though," cried Willie, though at the next moment he could have bitten his tongue off for letting out the secret.

"Aha, zen ze shild is steel alive," thought Pierre. "Aha, Meestaire Singleton, pay me more money to put her out of ze way, besides zis ozer job he just gif me."

"Ta-la, Frenchy; see you later," cried Willie, starting along.

"Where you live now, Willie? In a nice house, I suppose, eh?"

"In an ice house? No, though I'm too cool to let you catch me napping. Good-night, Frenchy; I'll see you at the Tombs!" and Willie ran off, leaving Pierre muttering to himself over his hard luck.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SEWING GIRL'S STORY—HARRY'S SURPRISE—PIERRE'S DISCOVERY.

AFTER Willie had left them the two lovers sat together on the bench, while the shadows gathered around them.

"Alice," said Harry, "I want you to become my wife. I am not rich, but we will be just as happy, more so, perhaps, than if we were as rich as heart could wish."

"Do you not think, then, that the rich can be happy?" asked Alice, with a smile.

"Yes, to be sure, but I do not attach so much importance to riches as some men do."

"I do," said Alice, quietly, "and I will tell you why. You have always known me as Alice Baldwin; that is not my name."

"Not your name, dearest?"

"No; it is Alice Rogers. Twelve years ago I was living in luxury with my father, I and my younger brother. My father being suddenly called to California, my mother being then dead, left his affairs in charge of a friend."

"Yes, yes," cried Harry, growing interested.

"This friend proved false to his trust, and ran away with all my father's wealth, leaving me and my little brother to the care of strangers."

"The villain."

"We struggled on and on till at last, seeing no hope I resolved to put an end to my existence. Leaving my little brother at home I hurried down to the river determined to end my wretched life."

"Poor girl!" murmured Harry.

"On my way I kicked something that lay on the sidewalk. I picked it up and found that it was a purse, full of notes and gold. I was rich, my sufferings were over, and the prospect was bright again."

"I hurried on, but suddenly the thought came to me that the money was not mine—that if I kept it I would be a thief, and I retraced my steps."

"Presently a woman approached me and said excitedly: 'You picked up something just now. Give it to me. It is mine. I dropped it on the walk.'"

"Something in the woman's manner told me that she was an impostor, and I refused to give up the purse unless she would describe it and tell how much money it contained."

"She refused to do so, called a policeman, and had me arrested on a charge of theft."

"But it was not sustained?" cried Harry.

"No, and the next morning, when taken to the court I was discharged, my accuser failing to appear. A lady in the court-room became interested in me, asked me my story, and took me home with her, where I took her name and lived with her till she died."

"And your little brother?"

"He was adopted by a family who went West. I tried to learn something of them a few years ago, but they were all dead, and my brother had disappeared no one knew where."

"Then he must be dead?"

"Beyond a doubt. So you see, having once enjoyed the blessings of wealth, I cannot put a low value upon them."

"You have never seen your father then since he went away?"

"No."

"Nor the false friend?"

"I was too young to remember him, but I do not think I have ever seen him since."

"What was his name?"

"Herbert Singleton."

"Great Heaven! that is the name of my employer, the banker!" cried Harry in the greatest surprise. "Are you not mistaken?"

"No, I am certain that that is his name. I cannot forget it. It is Herbert Singleton and nothing else."

"What was his business?"

"He was a banker, I believe, but I am not sure of it."

"It is very strange," mused Harry. "I always supposed Mr. Singleton to be the soul of honor, although hard and exacting. He bears an excellent reputation among men of business."

"I do not say that your employer is the same man," said Alice, "and I do not suppose he is. I did not know his name when you asked me for that of the false friend."

"It is very strange, at all events," replied Harry, musingly. "Such coincidences do not often occur."

"No, and you have no reason to believe that this is one of the few that do occur. You must not think anything more about it, dearest. I am sure that Mr. Singleton is all that a man ought to be."

Harry James' doubts had been awakened, however, and he resolved to watch his employer for Alice's sake.

Poor girl! She would not have expressed so good an opinion of the man had she known that he was the very one who had insulted her that evening.

Harry said no more about the matter, and soon afterward he escorted Alice home, and then went to his own humble abode, somewhat further uptown.

A week passed, the young lovers seeing each other nearly every night, and during this time no recurrence was made to Mr. Singleton or the probability of his being the false friend.

Singleton, meanwhile, had been anxiously awaiting news from Pierre, whom he knew would learn all that he desired.

One day he received a message, which read as follows:

"Have learned much. Union Square, to-night at nine. Bring your money. PIERRE."

Promptly at the hour named Singleton was at the fountain in Union Square, where he found Pierre waiting for him.

"What have you learned?" asked the banker, with feverish anxiety.

"Seet down, *mon ami*, do not get excited," said Pierre, taking a seat near the fountain. "You haf one clerk by ze name of James—Harry James—ees eet not so?"

"Well, what of that?" muttered Singleton. "I did not come here to talk about my clerk."

"Ah, non, eet ees about ze lady we speak. Hein! I was come to zat right away. She was call Alice Baldwin, and she sew on ze ladies' robes; she ees vat you call a modiste, a dress-makaire."

"H'm, so far so good! Poor, I suppose? So much the better."

"Oui, oui. She ees poor, and she live in ze tenement house in Frankfor street, not a ver' aristocratique residence, eh? *Ma foi!* we cannot all of us be bankairs and leave in luxury. *Diable, non!*"

"Well, well, is that all?" growled the banker, growing impatient.

"Non, zat ees not all, *mon ami*," chuckled Pierre, rubbing his hands. "Zere ees more. Ze ladie is ze sweetheart of Meestaire Harry James, your clerk, and if you wait one leetle minute ze ozer night, you sall see zem sitting togezzar in front of ze big church—ze church of ze Trinitie, at ze top of ze Wall street."

"Harry James' sweetheart!" gasped the banker.

"Oui, oui, *mon ami*, zat is as I say, and some day zey sall be marry in ze big church of ze Trinitie, at ze top of ze Wall street."

"Engaged!"

"Mais oui, my friend."

"Do they meet often?"

"Every night sometimes, but occasionally zey sall skip a night, and zen Miss Alice stay home and work ze sewing machine, and Meestaire Harry he go home all alone and think of her."

"You are sure of this?"

"*Ma foi!* I watch zem one, two, tree nights. I find all about zem both, and I show you zem togezzar any time you vish. *Diable!* I sall show you to-morrow night eef you like."

"I wish to see in order to be convinced," said Singleton coldly.

"Zen you gif me ze money you promise?"

"Yes."

"Ver' well. Meet me wiz ze carriage at ze of-feece to-morrow evening at six of ze clock and I show you sometings."

The next night as Harry and Alice were sitting on the bench in front of Trinity Church, inside the iron railing as usual, a carriage drove past, as did many, at that time of day.

In the carriage were Pierre and Singleton.

The carriage drove by several times without attracting the attention of the loving couple in the church-yard.

"I have seen enough," muttered Singleton.

"What you have told me is just what I wanted to know. Here are your hundred dollars. You can get out at the next block above."

"You see I tell you ze truth," laughed Pierre.

"Vat you do now, ven you know so moche?"

"Never you mind," returned Singleton.

"When I want you I will send for you."

If Alice and Harry James had not noticed Singleton's carriage, there was one who had, and not only once, but several times.

This was Willie Rufus, who, stationed near the corner of Rector street, saw it pass and noticed its occupants.

"There's Frenchy and the bloke that hit me with the cane," muttered the boy, "and that makes three times they've passed here. Wonder what's up?"

When the carriage passed the church again Willie saw Pierre point out Alice and Harry to Singleton, and mutter something under his breath.

"So-so, they're shaddinger the two spoons, are they?" mused the lad. "Pierre is allus in mischief, that ye can gamble on, and anybody that goes with him is jist as bad."

Willie had followed the carriage, and presently he saw Pierre get out and walk away.

"Oho, the confab is ended, is it?" he muttered, dodging into a doorway. "All right. Them two means mischief, and it's agin Harry James. I must warn his nibs, and if Pierre comes any more of his nasty games I'm a duffer and my name ain't Willie Rufus."

CHAPTER VII.

OM BARKER INTERRUPTED—ON THE SCENT—
HANS AND WILLIE—A CLEVER SCHEME.

A FEW days after Willie's meeting with Singleton and Pierre on Broadway he was shining shoes in the City Hall Park, when he saw a man sitting half asleep on one of the benches.

The bench was in a secluded part of the park, under a tree, being fairly well screened from observation.

The man was well dressed, but appeared to be under the influence of liquor and unconscious of what was going on around him.

As Willie began polishing the left shoe of his customer, having already finished the right, he saw a man take a seat on the bench, close alongside the inebriated stranger.

The boy recognized the man at once as Tom Barker, the pal of Pierre Bertrand whom he had prevented from robbing the honest German immigrant, Hans Schneiderkopf, in the neighborhood of Castle Garden, some weeks previous.

One glance sufficed to show him that it was Barker's intention to relieve the stranger of his money and valuables.

"There's Tom Barker on his old lay," he mused, hurrying through with his job as fast as possible.

Presently he stole another glance at Barker, and saw that he was sitting very close to the stranger, and supporting him with one arm.

"H'm! pretending to be his chum in case a peeler comes along," thought Willie. "He'll be his friend just long enough to swipe his watch and money, and then he'll slide. Not if I know it, though, my man."

He finished his work, struck his box a blow with his brush, gathered up his bit of carpet, blacking and brushes, and shoved them inside the box.

The gentleman removed his foot, tossed Willie a nickel, which the boy caught, and then walked away.

Up jumped Willie, slung his box over his shoulder, and hurried toward Barker, whose movements were beginning to look decidedly suspicious.

"Here, Tom Barker, you cheese that, or I'll call a cop," he said, loudly.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Barker, savagely.

"Oh, there ain't nuthin' the matter with me, nor never was. I'm right up to the standard, I am, and in good runnin' order. It's you what needs looking after, Mr. Tom Barker. What yer tryin' to do with that 'toxicated feller, that's what I want to know?"

"He's a friend o' mine, and if I want to stay with him till he's sobered up what business is it of yours?"

"Ah, cheese it, that game don't work with me fur nuthin'," cried Willie, in disgust. "Ye're tryin' to swipe his valubles, that's what yer doin', but I'm dead onto yer and it won't wash. I seen yer come up fust off, an' I knowed what yer was up to. Now you hook it or I'll sing out for a brass buttons and get you pulled in."

There was a policeman in sight at this very minute, and Barker arose, glared savagely at Willie, and started off toward Broadway.

"You young vagabond, I'll get hunk on you for this," he muttered, as he hurried away.

"Maybe you will and maybe you won't," retorted Willie, with a laugh and a characteristic gesture. "I wasn't born yesterday, Tom Barker, and I hain't lived in New York for nuthin'. I'm fierer than you think I are."

Then he turned and saw a crumpled card lying on the walk at the foot of the bench Barker had just vacated.

He picked it up, and found it to be the business card of a retail liquor dealer down town.

"Wonder if Barker or the other feller dropped this?" he mused, turning it over.

As he did so he saw scrawled on the back, in lead pencil, the following:

"Tox.—Be at Dutchman's in Bleecker street, this afternoon, at five o'clock. PIERRE."

Part of the writing was illegible, but enough was left to show that Tom Barker was now on his way to keep an appointment with his friend Pierre, but that, seeing a good chance to make some money, he had stopped for the purpose of robbing the drunken stranger.

"There's suthin' up," muttered the boy, as he turned the card over. "I'll bet it has suthin' to do with what Frenchy and the other feller was talkin' about t'other night when I saw 'em in the carriage. Oh, I say! the young gal has suthin' to do with it, I'll bet."

Hurrying toward the officer, whom he happened to know, he said, excitedly:

"Say, Mr. Johnson, see that that feller gets home safe, will you? He's a respectable drunk, he is; not one o' yer common kind. I jis' now

stopped a bloke from goin' through him, but he's on some other crooked lay, an' I'm goin' to foller him up."

"All right, my boy, I'll look after him," and, receiving this assurance, away ran Willie in pursuit of Tom Barker.

"Bleecker street, eh?" he mused. "Well, I can walk that, I reckon, or I can ride, if I've got ter. It's either four or five that he's got to meet Frenchy, and it's only a little after three now. I reckon it must be four. Wonder what part o' Bleecker street it is, anyhow?"

Hurrying along, he presently reached Pearl street, and saw Tom Barker on the other side of Broadway, still going up.

"H'm! he won't get away from me now, I guess," he muttered, keeping the man in sight.

Presently he jumped upon the step of one of the Broadway stages, running at that time, but long since discontinued, and rode several squares.

Then some one pushed open the door with a shove, nearly knocking Willie off his perch.

"H'm, an' old woman, o' course," muttered the boy, as he replaced his tattered hat on his head and took to the sidewalk. "If it had been a man he'd have give we warning, an' not shoved me off in the mud like that. Ole women ain't got no respect fur a young gentleman, anyhow."

It was not long, however, before he managed to get another and a tolerably long ride on the step of a stage, without being discovered by the driver or ousted by passengers getting on or off.

By this time he had reached Prince street, and presently he saw Barker on the other side, keeping up the same rapid but shambling gait.

Bleecker street the man turned westward and walked six or eight blocks, finally going into a small and rather neat-looking beer saloon near a corner.

Willie stood in a convenient doorway and presently saw Barker come out and look up and down the street.

"Not here yet," he growled. "Well, I'll have to come later, I reckon."

Then he went off down the street, and Willie started to follow him, but caught sight of some one in the saloon.

"Well, I'm blowed if it ain't the Dutchman," he ejaculated.

Then he swung open the door, bounced in and said to the fat, jolly, good-natured German sitting at a table near the bar:

"Hello, Dutchy! want a shine?"

"No, I don't want a shine. Gone right away once, or I kigs you owit," responded the other gruffly. "I was been boddered mit dem shine-yeer-boots all day, and der next one I catch I drown him mit a peer parrel."

"Oh, I say, Hans, or Jacob, or whatever it is, don't you know me?"

"Vell, so hellup me Fort o' Chuly! off it wasn't little Willie, der good little poy vat safe me von dat shnoozler down py Castle Garden."

"Oh, you do know me, do yer?"

"Yaw, I knowed you right away at once. You know vat I do now? I keeps me dot beer saloon mit dis place. I buy de oder feller owit yust efter I meet you on Broadway de oder efening."

"Blowed if I ain't glad to see you, Hans. How's Katrina? Bully gal that, Dutchy, an' no mistake."

"Oh, Katrina vas ged along foorst rade by dis gountry, my poy. You don't know she vas been here only dree monte already, she dalk so fine."

"Oh, shoot me if I wasn't going to fureget suthin'," cried the boy, suddenly. "Say, did yer see the feller what was in jest now, just before I came?"

"Ya, I see me dot feller. He vas looking for a Frenchman vat gomes in here already sometimes, but he don't been in to-day already."

"And you don't know him?"

"Ach, Himmel! did you tought I knowed eferybody in Ny Yorick, Willie?"

"Why, that's the feller what tried to humbug yer when yer fust come to the country."

"Dot dime I vas a greenhorn once?" cried Hans, excitedly. "Off I knowed dot I punch him by der snood!"

"No, you don't want to do that, Dutchy; you want to encourage 'em to come here."

"Ya, I sharge him ten cents for beer, und dot way I gets efen mit him."

"I say, Dutchy, those two fellows are comin' here to talk over some crooked business, and I want to hear what it is."

"Oh, you vas been a poy detective once, ain't it?"

"Ah, that be blowed! I want to know what they're talking about, and if they see me they won't talk, for they know me, both of 'em, and know that I'm onto 'em."

"Vell, vot you done, once?" asked the honest German, scratching his gray head.

"Oh, I've got it. Has yer gal got them green-horn clothes what she had on when I fust seen her?"

"Ya, I puds dem away by der glosset mit her room up-shtairs."

"Well, you just let me wear 'em, and I'll be a Dutch gal what don't speak English, and I'll hear every word them blokes says."

"Py shimminies, dot vas a good shnap, don't it!" cried Hans, gleefully. "So hellup me you vas make a smart man once, Willie, off you lifes long enough und don't die already."

"Ya, I tink so neider!" answered Willie, remembering Katrina's pet phrase on his first acquaintance with the pretty German girl, whereat Hans laughed and gave his young friend a hearty slap on the back.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUNG DETECTIVE—AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION OVERHEARD—TOO LATE.

HANS SCHNEIDERKOPF'S beer saloon was well nigh deserted at five o'clock in the afternoon, for the evening trade had not yet begun, and the afternoon customers had gone off to those places that set out a lunch to get their supper.

Two men had just entered and sat at a table over in one corner, drinking beer from tall thick mugs which held a full pint of the amber liquid.

"I'd have been here before," said one of the men, a low, red-nosed, seedy-looking scoundrel, "if it hadn't been for that little tramp, Willie Rufus. He followed me up here, I reckon, for I seen him talking with the Dutchman."

"Hein! You see ze little Willie Rufus talking wiz ze boss of ze shop, Tom?" asked the other, who was Pierre Bertrand himself. "Vere eese ze little rascal now?"

"Oh, he skipped out; guess he got tired out waitin'. What d'yer want to see me 'bout? I got yer note down at Dugan's, but I lost it."

"You go on ze job wiz me before, eh, Tom? Zat ees ven we make some money togezzer. You go wiz me anozzer time?"

"Yes, if there's money in it, of course. What's the lay now?"

"You know Meestaire Singleton, Tom?"

"The guv'nor what wanted the kid got out of the way? Yes, I know him."

"Ach, Himmel! dot boy take so long mit dem glose off Katrina's he hear him nodings vat dose shnoozers say," muttered Hans, impatiently. "Katrina, come here right away once," he shouted.

"Ya, fader," a voice was heard saying, and a young German girl entered the room and walked up to the bar.

To a casual observer the girl might have passed for the saloon-keeper's daughter, being plump, red-cheeked, and resembling Hans in many ways.

She wore a red petticoat, blue worsted stockings and wooden shoes, a red bodice with white sleeves, apron and cap, beneath which a few reddish curls could be seen.

"Vait on de chentlemans, Katrina," said Hans, putting a tray in her hand.

"Ya, fader," said the girl, moving shyly toward the two men at the table.

As she approached, Pierre, who was draining his glass, set it down hurriedly and muttered to himself, as he directed a searching glance at the girl:

"Mon dieu! I hafe see zat face before. Who ees zis? Zat ees not ze girl I see before."

"What do you want?" growled Tom Barker, looking first at the girl and then at Pierre.

"Ya, I dinks so," said the girl smiling, picking up Pierre's glass and putting it on the tray. "Zwei bier?"

"Who ees zis girl?" demanded Pierre of Hans. "Zat ees not your daughtaire I see here once before?"

"Vell, I don't say she vas, ain't it?" answered Hans stolidly. "Dot vas a greenhorn gal von Chermany, vat pelongs py a freund off mine."

"Hein! You call her Katrina? How ees zat? Your daughter was Katrina."

"Ya, I know me dot, und dis gal was Katrina once more, don't it. Did you t'ought dere vas only vun Katrina py Chermany? Himmel! dere vas more as fufy t'ousand. Dot gal don't could understand dot English lengwitch, only zwei bier und tane cents, dot's all."

"Zwei bier, ya, I tink so neider," smiled the girl as she went off with her glasses behind the bar.

"Well, I'm blowed if that wasn't the closest shave I ever had," she muttered, as he bent down out of sight. "Blowed if I didn't think Frenchy was dead onto me once, but I guess it's all right."

Then Master Willie Rufus, whose identity the reader must have already guessed, waited while Hans drew two glasses of beer, and then carried

them to the table, waiting till Pierre had given him the pay for them.

"Hein! zat ees all right," mused Pierre, as Willie took a seat at the next table, and pretended to read a German newspaper. "For once I thought zat ze girl was a fraud, but non, she ees only ze leetle German greenhorn vat know nosing vat I say."

"You say de guv'nor wants de gal carried away, do you?" asked Tom Barker, leaning over the table.

"Oui, oui, Meestaire Singleton loave ze charmante Alice, but she no loave heem, and so he asked me and my bon ami, Tom, to carry ze lady away to hees house, not vere he lif, but to ze shote up house he own."

"So we're to carry the gal away, are we? How much do we get for the job?"

"Ah, mon ami, always you look out for ze money. Hein! zat ees ze careful man, all ze time. Vell, ze charmante Alice ees vorth moche to Meestaire Singleton. He gif anysing to have her for hees own. I think we shall get a hundred for ze job now."

"That ain't bad for Alice," muttered Barker.

"How are we going to get her away?"

"Meestaire Singleton see to zat. He hafe anozzer leetle mattaire to feex forst. You meet me, my friend, at ze Six avenue and ze Twenty street zis evening, hein."

"Bet your life. I'm solid on that, old man. Have another beer with me?"

"No, I sank you; too moche of ze beer of ze Germans ees not goot for ze head. I sall run away, but you must meet me at ze time and place."

"All right. If you're goin' my way I'll go with yer," and as Pierre passed out Tom Barker followed him only a step behind.

"I've got on to 'em, Dutchy," cried Willie, springing up the moment the two scoundrels had disappeared. "They're going to carry off Alice Baldwin, the young feller's gal what talked so pooty, and the feller what said he'd gimme a job. I asked him. That's the gal, I'll bet a dime. I got onto the old duffer what struck me and the Frenchman twiggung her down at Trinity the other night, and I know it's her they mean."

"Ach! dot vas all Irish to me once," cried Hans. "Vot you spoke about, hey? I don't understand me all off dot."

"It's a job to run away with the girl and lug her off to some house what Singleton owns, but I'm onto 'em and I'll get ahead of 'em, see if I don't."

Then the excited young fellow began to take off his female apparel in the bar-room, forgetting where he was.

"Ach, himmel, Willie, don't do dot once," cried Hans. "Dis vasn't a dressing-room already. Only subbose some gustomers come in und sawn you. Vat dey tinks? Gone ride away up-shstairs und don'd got excited, und go by dot Italian lotcher's room off mind. He owe me some rent already, und maybe he dinks I come to collect it und shtick you mit a knife."

"Got lodgers, have you, Dutchy, and ain't been four months in the country? You're doin' well."

"Ya, I leds me oud dose furnished rooms, und dot Italian don'd pay me for more as a week. I dakes somedink von him, maybe, to pay dot rent."

"All right, Dutchy, I'll look out for him," and away ran Willie to get into his own clothes and follow on the trail of the two rascals.

He appeared in about ten minutes, looking as usual, his ragged hat perched on one side of his head and his box on his shoulder, and, tossing a silver quarter-dollar on the bar, said quickly:

"There's the quarter you lent me, Dutchy. I haven't seen you since to give it to yer. Tra-la! See you later," and out ran the jolly young waif before Hans could stop him.

"Py Shiminies! dot vas a goot leetle poy, off efer dere vas van," remarked the worthy German. "Dere vas my quarter! Himmel! dot poy vas too honest for de city off Ny Yorick, I dinks. I vas been afraid he was die young after dot."

When Willie left the saloon he made his way leisurely toward Sixth avenue, musing to himself:

"Sixth avenue and Twentieth street this evening, hey? Well, he didn't say what time this evening. It might beanywhere from now till ten o'clock. Wonder if they're going to take the gal away to-night? Wish I knew where she lived. Lord! why didn't I think of it before? She meets the feller every evening down at Trinity Church and sits there spoonin' fur an hour or so. Blowed if I hadn't orter gone right down there and told her to look out for herself. I'll do it now, blessed if I don't."

Reaching the avenue the boy jumped on a car going down-town, riding as far as the present

post office and walking the remainder of the way.

Old Trinity had just chimed the half hour past six o'clock as he hurried up and looked around him.

Mrs. McShane was sitting by the apple stand knitting a pair of blue woolen stockings for Willie himself, but the benches inside the yard were deserted.

"Faix, is it ye, Willie? Where have ye been all the afternoon?" asked the apple woman.

"Have yez had anny supper at all? Faix, the choild was worritin' about ye and declar'd something had happened ye."

"No, Missis Mac, I'm all right, thank yer, though I feel as if I'd like to be measured fur a beefsteak fust class. Have yer seen the young gal to-night?"

"Her as sits insoide wid the young man nearly ivery noight?"

"Yes, have you seen her?" cried Willie, excitedly.

"I have, faith, but the young mon wasn't here and I fear he's been hurted, for a man brought a note to the ledy herself and she wint away in a hurry like."

"Oh, the dickens! When was this, Missis Mac—long ago?"

"Not more than twinty minyutes or twinty-foive, perhaps, to be more precolse."

"The man gave her a letter?"

"Jist a bit av a note, and she seemed excited loike whin she read it, and axed where was he, and war he very bad, and thin wint away wid the man."

"Was it Frenchy?"

"It wor not. I think it wor wan av thim special missingers wid a red cap; but annyhow she wint up Bro'dway, an' that's the lashst I seen av her."

"All right. I mayn't be home till late," and away went Willie down Wall street at a rapid pace.

When he reached the address given him by Harry James, he found the place locked and no one around.

"I'll bet there's nuthin' the matter with him at all," he muttered, "and that ietter was only a cod to get her away. I wish I knowed where he lived: I'd go and tell him. Why the mischief didn't I get back sooner? That's what comes o' being too late. They've lugged her off, an' I can't do nuthin' till mornin'. Yes, I can. I'll run right up town an' spot 'em after all."

At the corner of Sixth avenue and Twentieth street, however, where he waited from half past seven till midnight, he saw no trace of Tom Barker, Pierre Bertrand, or the missing girl, and came at last to the disappointing conclusion that he had indeed been too late.

CHAPTER IX.

A BASE CONSPIRACY—BEHIND THE SCREEN—THE ARREST.

SINGLETON's banking-house was a busy place shortly after nine o'clock of a morning, but before that time there was nothing doing.

Mr. Singleton himself came in at fifteen minutes past the hour, and then all was activity, the clerks being in their places, and everything going like clockwork.

On the morning following Willie's adventures, just recorded, Mr. Singleton, contrary to his usual custom, was in his private office before nine o'clock, letting himself into the building with his own key, while the janitor was elsewhere.

No one knew he was there, and as one or two of the clerks came in they made no pretense of getting to work, for there was no stern master to overace them, and they could do as they liked.

At a few minutes before nine, Willie Rufus, brushed and combed, and wearing his best clothes, newly patched and darned by Mrs. McShane, entered the building, passed into the counting-room, and asked for Harry James.

"You'll find him in the office, I guess," said one of the clerks, "but if he isn't there you can wait. There's nothing you can steal but the safe."

"I ain't on the stealing lay," answered the boy, "but if I was, I'd steal you the fust thing."

"You would, eh? What for?" asked the alleged witty young man of the place.

"Why, I'd sell you to a drug store, to stick up in front and make folks sick," and with that Willie disappeared down the hall.

He found a door open and entered, finding himself in a small room, from which another opened.

"There he is now," he thought, as he saw a man sitting at a desk in an inner room.

He advanced as far as the doorway, and was

about to speak, when he saw that the man before him was not Harry James at all.

"It's the bloke what hit me in the street, and what I seen talking with Pierre—the same feller as wanted Gerty put out o' the way," he mused.

"That won't do at all," muttered the man, crumpling up a sheet of note paper and throwing it on the floor. "I'll have to start again. I must make the proofs positive before I can lodge Mr. Harry James in the Tombs."

"What's he got against Harry James, I'd like to know?" thought Willie.

Then, as the man went on writing busily, the boy stole noiselessly in and ensconced himself behind an ornamental screen at one side of the room.

"These letters will do the business," muttered Singleton, at length. "They will serve as links in the chain against him, and the money in his desk will do the rest. I have sent for the detective, and he will be here in time to make the arrest."

The banker then addressed two envelopes in a disguised hand, crumpled them up, threw them in the grate half torn, then crumpled the letters in the same way, smoothed them out partially, and laid them on his table.

"Now for the last bit of evidence," he chuckled to himself as he arose, took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and went to the little safe in one corner.

From this he took a package of bank notes and crossed the room to a high desk opposite his own.

"It's lucky I have a key to fit it, and that he doesn't know it," he said, smiling wickedly. "If this doesn't put Harry James in State prison and Alice Baldwin more thoroughly in my power, then I don't know what will."

Willie Rufus, thrusting his curly red head out from behind one edge of the screen, saw Singleton unlock a drawer of the desk, place the package of notes inside, relock the drawer, and stand musing for a moment.

"He's puttin' up a nasty job on the young feller, blowed if he ain't," thought the boy, dodging back as Singleton turned and reseated himself. "If I kin get out o' here without bein' seen I'll give the hull business away."

At that moment, however, a step was heard just outside, and some one entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Singleton. You sent for me on private business?"

"Yes, Mr. Jordan, and very painful business, too. Please be seated."

"That's Johnny Jordan, the fly cop," mused Willie. "I thought I knowed his voice. Suthin's up an' no mistake. This 'ere's as good as an extra edition of the News, blowed if it ain't."

"For some time past," began the banker, "I have missed sums of money from my safe without having the least clew to the thief."

"Your private safe, I presume?" interrupted the detective.

"Yes, the one in this office. I watched my clerks, but for a long time did not see anything suspicious in their conduct. Lately, however, the amounts taken have greatly increased, and this morning I miss a package containing five hundred dollars in greenbacks."

"A pretty good haul for one time," observed Jordan, changing the position of his feet.

Then, without being observed, he reached down and carelessly picked up a crumpled piece of paper, which he put in his pocket.

"I had recently heard that James, my confidential clerk, had been seen spending money recklessly, but it was only this morning that I was reluctantly forced to believe that he was the thief, and even now I hope I may be mistaken."

"If that ain't the biggest lie I ever heard," thought Willie.

"This morning when I came here I found these two crumpled letters lying there under the grate, as if it had been the intention of the receiver to destroy them. They are addressed, you will see, to Harry James," he added, as he picked the envelopes out of the grate.

"Have you read them?" asked Jordan, quietly.

"Not until I found that the money was missing, and then, with the rumors I had heard running through my mind, I was compelled to do so much against my will."

Thereupon he handed the letters to Jordan, who proceeded to read them carefully.

"One is from a person of whom Harry James has evidently borrowed considerable money, and demands immediate payment under threat of exposure, while the other is a bill for wines, cigars and other luxuries, amounting to a large sum."

"I am forced to believe that suspicion points to young James as the culprit," said Singleton, with a hypocritical whine. "His salary, though liberal, does not admit of such reckless extravagance, and I fear that he has violated the trust

sed in him, and has descended to the common thief. It grieves me sincerely to know this, but the thefts have been going on so long, and the amount now taken is so large that I fear that the law must take its course."

"What do you wish me to do?" asked Jordan, picking up the letters and their envelopes, and putting them carefully in his pocket-book.

"I do not know what to advise," said Singleton, musingly. "You are a detective, and ought to be the best judge. Sh! I hear his step now."

Jordan picked up a newspaper and pretended to be reading as Harry James entered the room.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Singleton," he said, in evident surprise, which the detective did not fail to notice. "You are early this morning?"

"It is you who are late, Mr. James," said Singleton, coldly. "You are not nearly as prompt as you used to be."

"My mother was sick last night, and I was kept up till late and so overslept," said Harry, quietly.

Then he took off his hat and light overcoat, hung them upon a peg, walked over to his desk and took a bunch of keys from his pocket.

He was visibly agitated, and so did not notice the detective who now stood close behind him.

He unlocked the drawer, drew it out and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

At the same moment a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Harry James, you are my prisoner."

"Who are you?"

"John Jordan, detective."

"What is the charge against me?"

"Robbing your employer. The money you hold in your hand was taken from the safe last night."

"Oh, my God! what does this mean?" gasped the poor fellow, letting the package fall and clasping his head in his hands. "I never took a penny that did not belong to me. This is all some horrible plot."

"The evidence against you is too clear to admit of doubt, and I must do my duty," said Jordan, gravely. "Come!"

Harry James resumed his hat and coat and went out with the detective, thoroughly dazed and confused by the awful charge against him.

Willie Rufus had slipped out unobserved during the confusion of the arrest.

As he now stood on the sidewalk and saw Jordan and Harry James walk up Wall street together he said to himself:

"It's a put-up job, but I'll bust it as sure as I live. I said I'd get even on that bloke for striking me, and I will, or never shine another pair o' boots!"

CHAPTER X.

TOM'S WIFE ON THE SEARCH—KATRINA'S IMPROVEMENT—MORE NEWS.

THE New street police station usually presented a quiet appearance shortly after nine o'clock in the morning.

The batch of tramps, loafers and pickpockets taken in the night before had been sent off to the Tombs, and the place had settled down to quietness.

As a general thing there would be nothing doing for an hour or more, and an air of tranquillity rested over the station and its surroundings.

On this particular morning, however, as the sergeant had composed himself for a quiet hour or two with his newspaper, he walked a lady in black, and stepped up to the desk:

"Have you seen anything of a young lady by the name of Alice Baldwin?" she asked.

"No, ma'am, I haven't. What has she done?"

"She hasn't done anything, and she's as nice a young lady that ever I had to lodge with me, and I know she would not do anything out of the way. She hasn't been found in the river, or run over, or anything dreadful?"

"There are no returns, ma'am, but you might inquire at headquarters."

"Well, she did not come home at all last night, and I'm worried about it, for I know she wouldn't go off and get married without saying anything, though her young man is a very nice young man, and good enough to marry anybody."

"So she's missing, is she?" asked the sergeant as the door opened, and he saw a chance of being relieved from a long harangue.

"Yes, sir, she's missing, and her name is Alice Baldwin, age twenty-six, I guess, good-looking, and—"

"Alice Baldwin missing!" cried a voice, and Harry James, who had entered with John Jordan, hurried up to the woman's side. "Did you say Alice is missing?"

"Yes, sir, and I am that perplexed I don't know what to do, as if I did not have enough to bother

me, with a runaway husband and a big lodging-house on my hands."

"Ah, you are Mrs. Thomas, with whom Alice lodged?"

"Yes, and a most unhappy woman. If that villain, Thomas, had not run away I would not have so much trouble. You haven't been married to Miss Alice, have you, for I judge you to be her young man by your talk?"

"No, I have not. Where is Alice?"

"That is what I want to know, and just what I came here for to find out. Oh, dear, I hope she is not dead."

"When did she disappear?"

"She never came home at all last night, and I worried so that—"

"Hallo, Johnny, I want to see you," interrupted Willie Rufus, who hurried in at that moment.

"What is it, Willie?" asked the detective, who recognized the lad.

Willie drew him to one side, and said in low tones:

"It's a put up job, this whole arrest business. Harry James didn't steal that money any more'n I did."

"Why, how do you happen to know anything about it?" asked the detective, considerably surprised.

"Sh, I'll tell you all about it." And Willie hastily told what he had seen in Singleton's private office.

"H'm! that puts a different face on affairs," muttered Jordan. "Keep mum about it, my boy. We'll let things take their course for the present. I think I see the evidences of some dark plot."

"I can tell you more, too, Johnny. That young fellow's boss has had his girl carried off somewhere."

"Who is she?"

"Her name is Alice Baldwin, and she's the nicest girl you ever see."

"Alice Baldwin! Why, that is the lady that this lady mentioned."

"Well, the boss has lugged her off, and the next thing to do is to get Harry James in the jug and out of the way."

"Singleton has done this?" said Jordan, greatly surprised.

"That's him."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, I'm putty tol'ably certain of it, Johnny, though I didn't see it with my own peepers."

"Keep this thing quiet, too. I have a reason for it."

"Oh, I won't say nuthin', but I'll do my level best to get her away from the duffer."

Jordan now stepped up to the desk, had Harry James' name and the complaint against him entered on the blotter, and then took him away to the Tombs, having sufficient consideration for the young man not to send him in the custody of a uniformed policeman, to attract the attention of the thoughtless crowd.

"I'll see you later, Johnny," muttered Willie, "and maybe I'll have something to tell yer by that time."

"Well, missis, what are you up for?" he asked the poor landlady, as Jordan and Harry James went out.

"I ain't up for nothing, you saucy boy, and I'm a respectable woman that has seen better days, and wasn't always obliged to let lodgings."

"Yes'm, I never heard of a boardin'-house missis what hadn't seen better days. Reckon you was a heiress once, and yer husband failed and then died, leavin' yer with ten poor young uns."

"No, he didn't die, the brute; worse luck!" cried Mrs. Thomas, wiping her eyes. "If he had I might marry some one else and be happy, but now I'm tied to that wretch, who never comes near me to aid me in my dreary life. Oh, dear!"

"Putty bad, mum," said Willie. "Why don't ye advertise for him? What's his name?"

"Thomas, the villain!"

"Thomas what, mum?"

"No, it ain't Thomas Watt at all. Thomas is his last name."

"Oh, it's the hind one, is it? Well, what comes in front?"

"You don't know him, do you?" asked the poor woman, eagerly.

"Well, I might."

"Well, he was called John, after an uncle of his, and Barker after another one, but I call him a brute for himself, the wretch!"

"Barker, eh?" cried Willie. "Are you sure it ain't Tom Barker, mum? I know him, and he's the biggest snoozer I know, or one of 'em."

"Does he drink?"

"Does he? Why, he's a reg'lar reservoy for rum—that's what he is."

"Does he work?"

"Work? Yes'm. He works all the poor, ig-

rant fellers he can find—works 'em out of all their money—robs drunken men in the park—humbugs the blokes that come to Castle Garden, and ain't afraid o' doin' any other dirty work that comes along. That's what Tom Barker is, mum, and I'd like to paste him in the snoot this very minute."

"I'll bet that's my worthless husband, John Barker Thomas, as sure as I'm here, the scoundrel!"

"Tom Barker is mean enough to do anything, mum, and I ain't scared to tell him so, and I'm dead onto him sure, this time."

"Come, young man, haven't you talked enough?" asked the sergeant.

"Ah, you go fall off the dock," said Willie, saucily, making for the door.

"I've a mind to go up to the Dutchman's and see if I can collar any more news of the gal," he mused, as he walked toward Wall street. "It was too blamed mean I missed the duffers last night, just when I was right onto their lay. I ought to get a kick in the neck for that."

Then he hurried off up-town to the saloon in Bleecker street kept by his friend Hans.

As he went in he caught sight of Tom Barker on the next corner, watching the door of the saloon.

"Ah, how you was, mein little Willie?" asked Hans. "I didn't saw some more last night, ain't it?"

"No. I was too busy to come in. I saw Tom Barker just now, watching the place from the corner. Has he been in here to-day?"

"Nein, he didn't been in already. Vat was he up to now, Willie?"

"The same old game. I'd like to find out where he took the girl, him and the Frenchman."

"Vell, how you found dot owd, h'm?"

"I dunno, but if he comes in here I might twig him and get dead onto suthin' or another."

"Fader!" cried a girl's voice just outside.

"Ach! dot was Katrina once," cried Hans.

"You ought to saw dot girl already, Willie. Not six months in the gountry and she was imbroved you don't know her."

"Fetch her in, Dutchy, and let's have a squint at her. Is she as putty as ever?"

"Ya, I yust believe dot. Katrina! come mit der shop once," cried Hans.

Katrina came in, looking as pretty as when Willie first saw her, but very much improved in manners.

"Katrina, dot was leedle Willie, dot boy vat did me some good dings de forst day we landed py dot Castle Garden. You remember dot?"

"Ya, fader, I know Willie already and I was glad to see him once more again already yet."

"Yust listen off dot once!" cried Hans, delightedly. "Don'd dot gal dalk like a book, und only four months in de gountry?"

"Glad to see you, Kat," said Willie, snatching a kiss from the pretty German girl.

"Ach! don't you do dot once," cried Hans.

"I don't let Katrina be kissed for nodings."

"I don't do it for nothing, I do it for fun," laughed Willie, "and because she likes it, don't you, Kat?"

"Oh, Willie, don't do dot some more!" cried Katrina, blushing, but not at all displeased, as Willie kissed her again.

"Run away, once," cried Hans, pretending to be angry. "De forst ting I know, all off dem customers dey dake a free lunch off kisses von Katrina, und dot don't bay me."

Away ran Katrina laughing, while Willie, looking out of the door cautiously, said to Hans:

"I say, Dutchy, that snoozer, Tom Barker, is loafing around here, and wants to come in, but he won't as long as I'm here. I'll bet he's got business here, and I want to know what it is."

"Vell, I tolt you vot I do once," said Hans.

"Dere vas dot glosset by de ice-box. Dere vas nodings dere, only some olt rubbish and dot hand-organ vat I took by dot Italian lodger vat I bounce because he don't bay me dot rent. Yust skip in dere once und you hears efery-dings."

"Oh, you collared the organ for rent, did you?" asked Willie, opening the door. "Did he have a monkey?"

"Ya, he hafe a monkey once, und he was by dot pack yard tied up mit a post."

Willie dodged into the closet as he heard some one coming, and Hans closed the door within a crack of about an inch.

Then he went forward, as Tom and Pierre entered and sat at a table.

The two worthies were served with beer and cigars, and then Hans sat at another table and buried himself in his paper.

"Did you see the governor this morning?" asked Tom, presently.

"Non, Meestaire Tom, I no see him, but ze money ees all right. Ze young ladees ees in ze

house on Seventeen street, and Meestaire Singleton he go to see her zis evening, and eef she make too moche fuss, *diable!* he take her away to ze countree. Meestaire Harry, her lovaire, ees in ze prisone, and soon he sall go to ze beeg one up ze rivaire, and zen ze *charmante*, Alice, she be Meestaire Singleton's wife."

"Not if I know it, I reckon," thought Willie.

"Won't she kick?" asked Tom.

"Eet ees of no use to keek, Meestaire Tom, when Meestaire Singleton hafe ze ladee in hees power. No one know ze house in Seventeen street, ze lovaire ees in jail, and to-morrow ze ladee go away."

"And when do we get our dust?"

"Hein! Ze money ees all right, you get him to-morrow. I no sheat you, my friend."

"All right, see that you don't. I'll meet ye at the old place, Duffy's, you know?"

Then Tom went away, and at the end of fifteen or twenty minutes Pierre followed him.

When he was well out of the way, Hans whistled, and Willie came out of the closet.

"I'm dead onto 'em, Dutchy," he said, eagerly, "and if I don't find the gal before the day is over, I'll give up tryin'."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ITALIAN'S ORGAN PUT TO A NEW USE—HANS AS A MUSICIAN—THE DISCOVERY.

"SAY, Dutchy, give me suthin' to eat, and I'll tell you what I've been thinkin'. I'm most starved, and I can't talk till I get suthin' inside me jacket."

Hans brought out a dish of cold pork and beans, some rye bread and cheese, a plate of pickles, and some German mustard, and said:

"Dere you vas, my poy, und off you vant a glass off beer, I draw him fresh mid der keg."

"Not any for me, Hans. I'm temperance," and Willie attacked the lunch with the vigor of a boy who had not eaten anything since morning.

"Now, lemme tell yer one thing," said Willie, when he had partly satisfied his appetite. "That Italian poorhouse what you swiped is going to come in handy for us."

"Vat you mean by dot?" asked Hans, who sat opposite his young guest smoking a pipe.

"The girl is somewhere in Seventeenth street, in a house owned by that duffer Singleton, the feller that struck me. Somebody is in charge of it, I reckon."

"Did you know de number of dot house?"

"No; I only twigged that it was in Seventeenth street—that's all."

"How you found out dot house off you didn't know where it was?"

"It's in Seventeenth street."

"Ya, mein leedle friend, but Seventeenth street run all de vay across der seedy once."

"Well, I think it's west, because Pierre was to meet Singleton at Sixth avenue and Twentieth street last night, and I reckon he took the girl from there to the house."

"Well, how you found him, den?"

"With the organ."

"Ach, dot organ couldn't ask questions. Maybe you dinks de mongey was found out where dot gal was been once."

"Ah, don't get funny," cried Willie. "You take the organ and play, and I'll go with you and take the pennies."

"Py shiminies, I mages more money as dot drawing beer," cried Hans.

"That's all right, but we want to find the gal. We'll go along Seventeenth street and play, and people will stick out their heads to hear us."

"Ya, I dinks dey drow de stove at us once off dey hear der kind off moosic I mage by dot organ."

"Then we'll keep a watch, and mebbe we'll see where the gal is shut up, don't you see?"

"Ya, I see me dot, but subbose dot Frenchman see you once?"

"Ah, go on! Ain't I going to put on Katrina's old clothes, and ain't you going to fix up funny like when I fust seen yer? What's the matter with yer? Can't yer see nu'hin'?"

"Ya, I see somedings already mit my eyes shut, but how aboud dot saloon? Who run him off I go avay once?"

"There's Katrina, to be sure. Ain't she good enough?"

"Py shiminies, I forgot dot. Ya, Katrina was tend dot bar fooret rade, und anyhow dere don'd somebodys come in very moche after one o'clock."

"Well, then, brace up and let's get a start. Fetch out the duds and I'll get into 'em. You'd better take the monk, 'cause he'll help to draw a crowd."

"Ya, I dinks dey crowd us off to dot station-house, ain't it?" muttered Hans, who had his doubts concerning the success of the expedition.

To Willie's boyish mind, however, there was nothing out of the way in the venture, and it seemed perfectly feasible that they might discover Alice's whereabouts in this manner.

Youth is always hopeful, but Willie had not determined to carry out his plan without having given it a great deal of thought.

It was necessary to act at once, and therefore there was no time to prepare an elaborate plan of action.

If this scheme failed it would then be time to call in the aid of the police, arrest Singleton, demand Harry James' release and expose the whole plot.

This was how John Jordan would have acted, but Willie Rufus was not John Jordan, and he acted in his own way and to the best of his ability.

It was a comical-looking establishment that appeared on West Seventeenth street, shortly after one o'clock that afternoon.

First, a big fat German, looking as if he had just stepped off an emigrant ship, carrying a heavy hand-organ and grinding away without any particular regard for time.

"Annie Laurie," played first as a jig, then as a march, and finally as a combination of both, was funny enough to attract a crowd, but that was not all by any means.

There was a monkey in a red coat and cap who climbed up to second story windows and received pennies in a little tin cup, took off his cap, bowed, made grimaces and chattered away at a great rate.

Then there was a young German girl with a red dress, white apron, astounding cap and wooden shoes, who banged away on a tambourine and danced, to the extreme delight of the small boys of the neighborhood.

The monkey was the star attraction of the show, however, and without him it is very likely that the organ grinder and his daughter would have been hooted off the street.

"I don't care if they pull up the paving stones and chuck 'em at me," said Willie. "I've set out to find Miss Alice and I'm going to do it."

So Hans ground away on the organ, changing from one tune to another, and making music by sheer force of muscle, which, by the way, is not much less than what many professional singers and musicians do, after all.

The monkey gathered in the pennies, people came to windows and doors, children gathered in droves, stared a while, and then ran away to their play, and the party moved on and on down the street.

It was getting late in the afternoon, Hans was tired and cross, the monkey was in a surly mood, and Willie was fast losing hope.

There were only a few more houses left, not a sign had been seen of the captive Alice, and Willie began to think that they had passed the house, and that she was kept a closer prisoner than he thought.

"Py shiminies, I was deadt blayed owit," muttered Hans, resting the organ on the stick he carried, and mopping his bald forehead with a red handkerchief. "I was go home und gife ub dot whole monkey business forefer. Off I been an Italian once und hafe to blay on der organ, I go drown myselluf."

"Oh, I say, Dutchy, don't give it up yet?" pleaded Willie. "I must find the young lady before we quit; I can't give it up till there ain't no more chance to do nuthin'. Play some more, there's a good feller, and keep on down to the end of the street."

"Ach, tuyfel! mein pack was proke once," cried Hans. "Off I was py my saloon already, I drinks de whole off a keg of beer up, I was so dirty."

"Well, if we don't catch it in this block, I'll go home," said Willie, despairingly. "Play up, Hans, so as to let folks know we're here."

The street was deserted, the houses seemed unoccupied, and nothing but closed blinds and drawn curtains could be seen.

There were no children about, pedestrians seemed to shun this part of the city, and "To Let" notices were on many of the houses.

"Ach! more bedder vas it to blay by a deaf und dumb asylum, I dinks," growled Hans. "Dot house vas do rent. How you expect somebody come owit off dot, I don't know once."

"On, well, play anyhow."

So Hans started up "Molly Darling," grinding away as if he wished Molly were at the bottom of the North river, which was not far away.

Suddenly, from between the blinds of the middle window on the second story of the very house before which they stood, a bit of white paper was thrust out.

The monkey saw it before Willie did, and ran nimbly up by the flower shutters, perched on the ledge and took the paper.

Then Willie looked up, saw the action, turned hot and then cold in an instant.

"Bring it down, Petey," he said to the monkey, and the animal, first touching his cap politely to the unseen occupant of the house, clambered down and handed Willie a folded note.

"Go on, Hans," he said, and the German walked ahead, lugging the heavy organ and playing with all his might.

Willie had taken good notice of the house, and was not likely to forget it, but when he had reached the corner he caught Hans by the arm and said:

"That's enough, Dutchy. I've done it. Miss Alice is in that house back there, and she's wrote me a note, and I'll get her out if I have to raise the roof."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LETTER—JORDAN COMES TO WILLIE'S AID—WAITING.

IN a quiet beer shop, a block or so away from the house where Willie had received the note, sat our hero and his friend, resting after their long tramp.

Hans regaled himself with a huge glass of beer, generally known as a "schooner," together with a big cheese sandwich and a pickle, while Willie contented himself with a glass of watery milk.

The organ stood in one corner, and the monkey sat on it nibbling an apple and some crackers and cheese.

On the table in front of the boy was a note, the contents of which were as follows:

"DEAR WILLIE: I have recognized you, and know your object. I am kept a close prisoner here. Do not attempt now to effect my release, for the place is watched, and I would be taken away at once. If you can, try and be here by nine to-night. There is a grapevine at the back of the house which leads up to my room. I have no time to write more."

"Yours in haste,"

"ALICE."

"I knowed I'd find her," muttered Willie, reading the note over again for the fourth or fifth time. "Now, the thing is how to get in there. The grapevine, hey? Well, that's all hunky, but I've got ter get round to the back o' the house fust. Nine o'clock, hey? It's putty nearly five now. Wish I could find Johnny Jordan. He'd give me a tip, I reckon."

Then folding the note, and putting it in the pocket of his dress, Willie finished his lunch and said to Hans:

"Come, Dutchy, let's go back to Bleeker street. I want to get these togs off, and then go and see my friends."

"Mein Gott! you vant me to kerry dot heafy organ all der vay back by dot saloon? Shiminies! I dink I trow him in der river forst, und der mongey, too."

"No, that would be cruelty to animals," said Willie, with a grin. "What's the matter with takin' the Bleeker street car down? It goes by Ninth avenue and Fourteenth street."

"Ya, I do dot. You vas a shnard leedle poy, Willie, und you knows eferydings. Himmel! off I tought I vas had to walk back once mit dot organ, I go chump off der dock mit der middle off der river."

However, that difficulty was easily surmounted, and in half an hour Hans and Willie were once more at home.

Our young hero then changed his clothes, stuck the precious note from Alice in an inside pocket of his coat, tossed on his cap, gave Katrina a kiss, wished Hans a hearty good-night and was off like a shot.

He took a Sixth avenue car down-town, and then ran down to Trinity, where he hoped to find Jordan, as the detective usually came around at that time.

Mrs. McShane sat at her apple-stand, and was glad to see the boy, for Gerty had been worrying over his long absence.

"Has Johnny Jordan been here yet, missis?" he asked eagerly, after assuring the apple-woman that he was all right.

"He have not, Willie, but I do be expectin' him anny minyute. Maybe you'd better go to the polis station if ye want to see him bad."

Just then, however, Willie espied Jordan approaching, and away he ran to meet him.

In a few seconds he had told Jordan of the search for Alice and its result.

"Now how am I goin' to get in that house?" he asked. "It won't do to bust it in, 'cause then there'll be a row, and like enuff the gal 'll be hustled away right under our snoots."

"Quite right," said Jordan, musingly. "I think I had better leave this thing to you, seeing that you've managed it so well this far. I don't want to frighten Singleton yet, as I want to use him, and if I appear he will take the alarm and kip."

"That's just what he'd better do if he don't want to get jugged," said Willie. "What d'yer want me to do?"

"I'll tell you, but we must go up to that house first. Wait here a few moments."

Then Jordan hurried off and Willie waited at the apple-stand for nearly ten minutes.

"It don't seem as if he'd give me the dead shake like that," he muttered, "but I don't see what's become of him. He ain't nowhere in sight."

At that moment an old man, wearing a long black coat, dark trousers and a high silk hat, came walking along using a heavy cane.

Willie did not pay him any particular attention, when, as the man neared him, he suddenly said:

"Come, Willie, if you're ready."

The voice was Jordan's, but the appearance and general make-up was not, by any means.

"Well, I'm blowed!" muttered the boy. "Is that you, Johnny?"

"Certainly. I'm old Mr. Harrison, and you're my son. Don't forget that, and if you speak to me don't call me Johnny, by any means."

"Bet your life I won't, pop," said Willie, with a grin. "Oh, I'm fly, I am, and when I get bigger I'm going to be a detective."

Jordan and Willie then went up-town, and the boy pointed out the house where Alice was kept a prisoner.

Two doors below was a house, on the front of which, beside the door, was a small card which announced that furnished rooms for gentlemen only could be had within.

"The very thing," muttered Jordan. "I thought that I might be able to get a room in the neighborhood, but I didn't hope to get so close as this."

Then he rang the bell and was presently accosted by a sharp visaged female who came to the door and asked what he wanted.

"Have you a room that you can let me have for myself and son?" he asked, and if Willie had not known that Jordan was with him, he would never have recognized him, so changed was his voice.

"Come in," said the ogress. "I have one room on the second floor I can let you have if you'll be satisfied with one bed, or I can put your boy in with mine, if he don't kick nor talk in his sleep."

"I can take him in with me," said Jordan, mildly. "I always do."

The woman then showed Jordan the room, which was on the second floor in the rear, and was not much bigger than a good sized clothes press.

"That will do very well," said Jordan. "What are your terms? I will take the room to-night."

"Five dollars a week for the two, gas extra if you use it after ten," said the woman, mechanically.

"That will do very well," said Jordan, taking out his pocketbook and giving the landlady a five-dollar bill. "Will you give me a latch-key, please? I shall go for my supper now, and will return later with my things."

The lady did not ask for reference, as she was not in the habit of getting her rent in advance, and the five dollars satisfied her that none were needed.

She provided Jordan with a night-key, complimented him on having such a handsome boy, and was sure that they would never have any trouble.

Then the detective and his young friend went out and had supper at a restaurant, returning at about eight o'clock.

"Now," said Jordan, when they were in the room alone, "I leave this thing to you, Willie, for I know that you will succeed. You won't have any trouble in getting over two fences and climbing a grape-vine frame to the second story window, I suppose?"

"Well, I guess not," muttered Willie. "That's just nuthin'. I could do that any time."

"You will want this," said Jordan, laying a loaded revolver on the table. "You know how to use it."

"I can learn putty quick," the boy answered; and Jordan soon instructed him in the use of the dangerous weapon.

"The sight of it will probably be as effective as a shot from it," continued the detective.

"Don't fire unless your life or that of the young lady is in peril, and then aim to wound rather than kill your man."

"Right you are," muttered Willie. "I ain't going to get my neck stretched, and don't yer forget it. What'll I do when I get there?"

"Go out by the front door of the house if you can. If not, whistle for me, and I'll go to the rear and help you."

"All right, Johnny—pop, I mean, I'll get Miss Alice away, and no mistake."

"Good. Now I'm off. You can do what you like, but don't fail to be on time."

With that Jordan went away, taking the key with him, as Willie would have no more use for it than he himself might.

There was nearly an hour to wait, and to Willie it seemed as if the time would never come.

At last, however, he heard a clock in the house strike nine, and, thrusting the revolver in his pocket, he put on his cap, turned out the light, hurried down-stairs, let himself out by the rear door into the yard and gazed up at the second house above.

"There she is," he muttered, as he saw a light in the second story, "and I'm goin' to get her out o' that or know the reason."

CHAPTER XIII.

A PERILOUS ASCENT—IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP—ALICE'S TERROR.

STANDING for a moment in the back yard of the house on Seventeenth street, Willie Rufus listened intently before beginning his task of rescuing Alice.

He heard nothing, saw nothing to alarm him, all being dark and silent.

The light in the window of the house where Alice was kept a prisoner seemed like a guiding star, and as he looked at it he once more muttered:

"There she is, and now to get her out."

Crossing the yard, he took a run of two or three steps, gave a spring and was on top of the fence like a cat.

He dropped quickly into the next yard, crossed it, and reached the top of the fence in the same agile manner as before.

In another moment he was in the yard and approaching the house.

The cross pieces of the grape arbor reached within a few feet of the ground, and within easy reach.

"That's an easy enough climb if the thing holds me," he muttered. "I ain't very heavy but some o' these flin's ain't good fur nuthin', and wouldn't hold a mouse."

Then drawing himself up by one of the uprights he planted his feet on the first slat, and tested it with his weight.

"That's all right," he muttered. "The wust of it is, one of 'em might bust when I was higher up, and then I'd get a bad tumble."

However, the risk he ran was not as great as the danger to the young lady in the house, and Willie felt as if he could take any risk to save her.

Up and up he climbed, from one stick to another, keeping close to the main supports, so as to be ready to depend on them in case the others were to break.

The higher he went the more the vine spread out, and often its branches saved him a long stretch, and from depending too much upon the frail trellis work.

Up and up he went till he lay at an angle, having passed the point where the uprights ceased and the joists slanted.

The light still shone before him and he directed his course toward it, keeping his wits about him at the same time.

Once or twice the string places cracked under him, and he thought that he would fall.

He clung to the stoutest branches he could find and did not trust more of his weight than was absolutely necessary to the treacherous slats.

"This sort o' thing may be safe enough for cats to run over," he remarked, "but it wasn't built for big fellers like me to fool with."

Up he went, however, foot by foot, thinking nothing of the danger, till at last he reached the window where the light shone brightest.

One blind was closed, the other being thrown back and fastened to a catch set between the bricks.

The shade was drawn all the way down, and there was not so much as a crack left through which he could peep into the room.

Standing upon the last brace of the trellis, which was firm enough to hold him, he tried to raise the window softly.

It was fastened on the inside, and resisted his efforts.

He listened attentively for a few moments, and then thought he heard some one moving in the room.

He tapped lightly upon the glass with his knuckles, and waited with breathless anxiety for a reply to his signal.

At first there was no response, and he rapped louder than before.

Then a quick step was heard, the shade was drawn half way up, and Alice stood before him, on the other side of the glass.

In an instant the lower sash was unbolted and

thrown up, and Alice threw her arms around the boy's neck and kissed him.

"Oh, you brave Willie!" she cried; "what have you not risked for my sake?"

"By jingo! I'd do it again for that!" cried the boy, the hot blood rushing to his very temples.

"Kiss me agin, Miss Alice, and I'll die for you!"

"Come in at once or you may be seen," whispered Alice, earnestly.

Willie entered forthwith, closed the window, pulled down the shade, and said:

"Has his nibs been here yet?"

"My jailer? No, and I pray Heaven he may not come."

"But you've seen him, haven't ye? Whiskers, I mean—the feller what struck me in the street, Singleton?"

"Yes, I have seen him," muttered Alice, her bosom heaving with emotion. "The wretch came to me last night and gloated over my misery."

"Tantalized ye, did he?" muttered Willie. "H'm! just wait till I get at him once, the snoozer! I'll leave my name and address on his snoot, or take the biggest licking I ever took yet."

"Yes, the scoundrel taunted me with my helplessness when I refused to listen to him, and swore he would bring me to terms. Oh, the wretch! This is not the first injury he has done me. Tell me, have you seen Harry?" the poor girl added, excitedly.

"Yes, I've seen him," said Willie, evasively.

"Something has happened to him," cried Alice. "Tell me what it is! I must know the worst!"

"Well, it ain't very bad," said Willie encouragingly. "Some fellers wouldn't think nuthin' of a thing like that."

"You are deceiving me, Willie," cried Alice. "Something dreadful has happened to him and you are afraid to tell me."

"Wishermaydle, Miss Alice," said the boy eagerly. "It ain't nothin'. Singleton, that's Whiskers, has got him put into the Tombs, but I know suthin' that'll get him out in two shakes."

"Harry in prison!" gasped Alice. "Why, what has he done?"

"He ain't done nuthin', and it's all a put up job by Whiskers to get him out o' the way. He says Mr. Harry stole some money, but I know he didn't, 'cause I seen Whiskers put it inter his desk my own self."

"Oh, the villain! With Harry's name blighted, he thinks to secure me. You will save him, though, won't you, Willie?" and Alice seized the boy by the hand.

"Why, to be sure I will; but I say, Miss Alice, while we are a-chinnin' here we're losin' heaps o' time. I come to save you fast, and we'll think of Harry James afterwards."

"I had forgotten myself, thinking of him," murmured Alice. "How are you going to take me away?" she added presently. "Is the grape arbor safe?"

"Well, for me it is," returned Willie, smiling. "but I wouldn't like to have you risk it, and besides, there's two fences to shin up after that, and I guess ye ain't equal to them, are you?"

"Hardly," returned Alice, smiling in spite of her distress.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," whispered Willie, drawing closer.

"Well?" gasped Alice.

"Wait till Whiskers comes, and then make a dash for it. The doors is all locked, ain't they?"

"Yes. I can only go from this room to the next. I was in the front one this afternoon, when I heard you outside, and oh! you cannot know how sweet your voice sounded to me."

"I expect it did," said Willie, musingly, the blushes coming again into his handsome face; "but, I say, Whiskers may come at any minute, and—"

At that very moment the front door was heard to close with a slam.

"Stick me out of the way somewhere!" whispered Willie, excitedly. "Hurry up, there ain't no time to lose."

The suite of apartments in which Alice was imprisoned comprised two rooms, connected by a wide, double doorway, on either side of which hung heavy draperies.

The rear room was used as a sleeping apartment, the front being fitted up as a parlor, and from this a door opened into the hall outside, being the only means of entrance or exit.

"He will see you!" gasped Alice, trembling with nervous agitation.

"Sh! Keep cool, and I'll risk all that," muttered Willie. "Don't let on that I'm here and I'll get you out of this all right."

At that moment a step was heard ascending the stairs, and presently passing along the hall outside.

The front room was dark and Willie hurried in, and crouched behind a big, plush-covered

easy-chair that stood in one corner by the window.

Hardly had he ensconced himself before the key was turned in the lock, the door was opened and Herbert Singleton entered, a look of triumph upon his sinister face.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB—WILLIE TO THE RESCUE—PLANS FOR THE MORROW.

HERBERT SINGLETON closed the door by which he had entered, put the key on the inside, turned it, and walked through the double doorway into the room beyond.

"Ah, my pretty Alice!" he cried. "How well you are looking to-night. I hope you have made up your mind to listen to reason?"

"Mr. Singleton," said Alice, rising, "you did me a great injury years ago, when I was but a girl. Do not do me a greater one, now that I am a woman."

"I am at a loss to know what you mean, Miss Alice," said Singleton, quietly.

"I am Alice Rogers, the daughter of the man whose fortune you stole—whose children you turned adrift upon the world," said Alice.

"What! you Alice Rogers? By Jove! you have wondrously improved since then. Now that I know this, I am more than ever determined that you shall be mine."

"Never!" cried Alice.

"Nothing can save you!" cried Singleton. "Your lover is a thief, and is even now in the Tombs, waiting to be sent to prison. You are in my power, and you will be wise if you submit at once, for have you I must and will!"

"You are as much the villain as ever, Herbert Singleton," cried Alice. "You wish to swear my lover's good name away, but you will not succeed. You have thrown him into prison on a false charge, but already your evil schemes begin to fail, and I defy you!"

"By Jove! you look handsomer than ever," cried Singleton. "I must have one kiss, if it costs—"

"Stand back!" cried Alice, evading him, and running into the front room.

"Oh, you can't escape!" cried Singleton, with a laugh, "and I'm bound to have my kiss, first or last."

"Come and kiss me, then, if you want to!" cried a boyish voice, and Willie Rufus suddenly stood in the doorway in front of the astonished Singleton.

"You here, boy!" he hissed. "How dare you interfere with me? Stand back, or I'll break your infernal young neck!"

"Oh, I guess not!" cried Willie, and as Singleton stepped forward he was suddenly confronted by a gleaming revolver in the hands of the undaunted youth.

"Jest you stay where you are, Whiskers, or I'll read ye a story in six chapters, right out o' this little pepper-box, and every chapter a red-hot un!"

"You young scoundrel!" hissed Singleton. "If you dare to threaten me I'll—"

"Jest put a button on yer jaw, Whiskers, and screw it down. Willie Rufus, Esquire, has the floor at present and he's goin' to keep it, you bet. Go and sit down."

"You impudent young—"

"Go sit down!" hissed Willie, cocking his weapon, "and deuced quick, too, or I'll read ye chapter one putty sudden."

Singleton backed slowly away, his eyes darting forth mingled fear, hate, and rage upon the plucky little fellow before him.

"Go open the door, Miss Alice," said Willie, without turning. "Sit down, I tell you!" to Singleton.

Alice opened the door, and as Singleton heard the key turn in the lock he took a step forward.

"I'll speak to you jest once, and no more," muttered Willie, bringing the baffled villain to a halt by suddenly leveling his weapon at the man's head.

Singleton stood irresolute, as if wondering if the boy would dare do as he threatened.

"Oh, I'll do it, old man—don't you be scared on that point," cried Willie, rightly interpreting the man's look. "Now, then, Miss Alice, put the key on the outside."

There was a rattling in the lock, and Willie moved backward toward the hall-door.

Singleton stood glaring at the boy as he moved away, and once or twice he seemed inclined to spring forward.

"Don't you do it, Whiskers," muttered Willie. "I've made up my mind to get out of this house with the gal, and if you try to stop me you'll get hurt."

"You young imp, you shall pay for this!" hissed the banker, as he ground his teeth in impatient rage.

As Willie reached the door he dashed suddenly out and pulled it shut.

Click!

The bolt was shot in an instant and none too soon.

Almost simultaneously with the closing of the door came the shock of Singleton's form against it.

He tried to pull it open, but he was an instant too late.

Then he showered blow after blow upon the panels with his boot heels, in the hope of dashing them out.

"Skip!" cried Willie, hurriedly. "You go first and open the door down-stairs and I'll look out for this feller. He's a spunky bloke, but I'll settle his hash if he don't shut up."

Along the hall and down the stairs ran Alice, and a moment later Willie followed.

Alice had opened the door by the time he reached her, and the cool night air now fell upon his face.

"Quick!" he hissed as he heard a crash up-stairs.

In a moment they were out on the stoop.

"This way!" cried Willie, seizing the young lady's hand and hurrying down the steps.

As he reached the walk a carriage suddenly drove up and a man got out.

"Is that you, Willie?" he asked.

"Bet yer life, Johnny," cried Willie, recognizing the voice of his friend, Jordan, the detective. "It's all right, Miss Alice. He's a friend o' mine, and a bully boy, you bet."

Jordan then assisted Alice to enter the carriage, following in quick time himself, while Willie jumped on the box.

Away dashed the carriage up the street, and as it did so Singleton appeared on the stoop of the house Willie had just vacated.

"Good-night, Whiskers!" shouted the saucy fellow from the box. "I'll come and see ye off when ye go up the river; Sing Sing, you know, nice place for such blokes as you."

Singleton stamped his foot with rage and returned into the house.

"Baffled and by a boy!" he hissed. "He will not triumph long, for I will carry out my schemes, come what will."

"Sir," cried Alice, seizing Jordan's hand, as the carriage drove away, "how can I ever thank you sufficiently for what you have done for me this evening? But for you I know not what might have happened."

"Oh, you must not thank me, Miss Baldwin," returned Jordan, smiling. "Your thanks are due to my young friend Willie Rufus, who sits on the box. He is the hero of the occasion."

"But without your assistance he could have done nothing."

"I beg to differ from you, Miss Baldwin. He would have done a great deal, and would have rescued you, I don't doubt. He did not call upon me till the last moment."

"He says you are his friend."

"So I am, Miss Baldwin, and yours as well. Though I am but an ordinary detective, I feel for and am glad to serve you. I am glad you escaped from that villain."

"Mr. Singleton? Yes, so am I. He is a wicked man and this is not the first time he has done me an injury."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, though I did not know that he was the man who carried me away. He came to me last night, after I reached the house, and then I recognized him as a man who had once before accosted me in Trinity church-yard."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and he alluded to it, told me who he was and the high position he occupied, and asked, yes, even demanded that I would be his wife. I repelled his advances with scorn, when he replied coolly that if I did not decide by to-night he would marry me in spite of myself."

"Thanks to Willie, he has not done so," replied the detective. "By the way, you said he had injured you formerly. How was that?"

Alice then related her history in brief, the detective being very much interested.

"We have a little affair with Mr. Singleton tomorrow," he said. "You know Mr. Harry James, I presume?"

"Yes," replied Alice, blushing.

"Have no fear concerning him, for we will clear him, without a doubt, and, unless I greatly mistake, put Mr. Herbert Singleton in his place."

"Where are we going?" asked Alice, after a pause.

"Down-town, I suppose. Willie has probably given the driver his directions."

Just then the carriage stopped, and Willie, opening the door, said:

"Blessed if I know your number, Miss Alice. What do you think? I was going to drive to old

Trinity, but you don't live there, o' course. I've got so used to seein' you there that I thought just you must live there."

Alice laughed, gave him her address, and asked him to come and sit beside her in the carriage.

"Of course I will," said the boy, and when he had given the driver his directions he got inside and went home with Alice.

"By the way, Willie," said Jordan, when they stopped, "the case of Harry James comes on tomorrow, and I want you for a witness."

"I'll be there, Johnny, and don't yer ferget it," returned the lad.

"And you'll escort Miss Alice there?"

"Well, I reckon I will, and I'd like to scorch Whiskers to the same place, only I'd leave him in the cage, you bet."

The young lady now entered the house, and Willie and the detective parted to meet again on the morrow, when exciting events were to take place.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAY OF THE TRIAL—TOM BARKER FINDS HIS WIFE—HANS IN TROUBLE.

THE sun shone bright over old Trinity, and all nature seemed at its best.

The city looked clean and neat and the autumn air was pure and balmy.

Mrs. McShane sat at her apple-stand, just outside the fence in front of the church, and seemed as happy as a lark.

She wore a brand new frilled cap, with real old Irish lace (an heirloom brought from the old country) around the edges, while her dress was as clean as soap and water could make it, and was adorned at the throat by a fresh, green ribbon.

She had just started a new pair of winter stockings for Willie, and was working away as if she intended to get them done that very day.

"Begorra, it's foine ye're luckin' this mornin'," Mrs. McShane said Tim O'Rourke, the big policeman on the beat, as he sauntered up.

"Faix, thin, I have reasons," said the apple-woman. "Have an apple, sor? Ye're wilkin' to it, I'm sure."

"It's not goin' to be mar'ed ye are, Mrs. Mac, that ye're fixed up so foine, is it?"

"No, indade, Misther O'Rourke, though I'm none too ould, faix. Ye know little Willie, the bye that boords wid me, do ye not, sor?"

"Faith I do, and a brighter nor a saucier bye ye'll not foind in the neiberhood."

"Well, Willie is up in the coort, at the Tombs, this mornin', and that's phwy I'm dressed up."

"Willie in the Tombs! Phwat has he been doin'? Why don't yez go to the alderman av the ward and ax him to give his influence to get him off? He'd do it in a minyute."

"Ah, thin, go an wid yez," cried the apple-woman. "It's not a pris'nor at all that he is, but a witness."

"Ye don't say, Mrs. Mac! Troth, that's a hoigh honor for a bye loike him. Bedad, I see the roundsman comin' up the street, and I must be aff. Good-mornin' to ye, Mrs. McShane."

Presently along came one of those brainless young gentlemen, called dudes nowadays, who think more of extremes in dress than of anything else in life.

He stepped up to the stand, and was trying to select a choice peach when some one brushed against him and nearly knocked him across the stand.

"Scuse me," said a rough-looking man. "Didn't think I was goin' to run against ye."

"Is it ye, Tom Barker, and at yer ould tricks agin, I'll be bound," cried the apple-woman, looking up. "Look eout, sor, to the fop; 'that's a bad man, and I'm sure he meant to pick yer pocket."

"You shut up, Missis Mac, an' mind yer own business," growled Barker. "I'm an honest man, I am, and if the young feller thinks I took anything o' his'n he kin search me, so he kin."

"Weally, my man, I don't know as I've lost anything," said the fop, beginning to search his pockets, "but then I might—that is, I think—Oh, baw Jove, whatevah has become of my watch? Heah, stop, bwing me back my wepeatah!"

Barker had started off at a rapid gait by this time, but had gone but a few steps when he collided with a woman dressed in shabby black, who had just turned the corner of Cedar street a few moments before.

"Yes, you'd better stop, indeed!" she cried, grabbing Barker by the collar. "So it's you, is it, Barker Thomas? Ain't you 'shamed to run away from your poor wife all these years, and leave her to starve and die for all you care? I'll give it to you, you wretch!"

Tom Barker tried to squirm out of the wom-

hands, but Mrs. Thomas, for it was Alice's lady herself, pounded him over the head with a big umbrella she carried, and held on to his collar with all her might.

Hard work had developed her muscles, and she banged away at her truant husband till the umbrella was nothing but a wreck.

"Lemme go, you old tyke," cried Tom, striking at the woman and wrenching himself out of her clutches.

"Stop thief!" cried the fop, rushing up. "That fellah has my watch."

Barker turned upon his accuser and struck him a blow which sent him reeling against the iron railings.

He would have escaped, but at that moment Willie Rufus ran up and grabbed him by the arm.

"Hold on, Mr. Tom Barker, you're wanted," cried the lad.

"Hold him tight," screamed Mrs. Thomas, pounding the scamp with the remains of her umbrella.

"Stop thief!" yelled the fop, recovering himself and smoothing out his damaged hat.

Barker tried to get away, but several gentlemen hurried up, attracted by the noise, and his retreat was cut off.

Willie dove his hands quickly into the fellow's pockets and brought up a handsome gold watch and the broken end of a chain.

Officer O'Rourke now appeared and took the thief in custody, the fop charging him with having stolen the watch which Willie now handed over to him.

"Ta, ta, deah boy. I'll wemembah you some day," he said. "O'Rourke," suddenly changing his tones, "don't you let that fellow get away. I've been watching him for some time, and now I've collared him."

"Johnny Jordan, as I'm a sinner!" cried Willie. "I'll be blowed if I'd have knowed you, if you hadn't let it out yerself."

"Yes," said the supposed fop, now suddenly transformed into Jordan, the detective, "it's I, Willie, and glad to see you. Are you going to the Tombs this morning?"

"Bet your boots; but I've got to take Miss Alice."

"Very well, run and get her, and I'll meet you here in half an hour, and we'll all go up together."

Tom Barker was carried off, the crowd dispersed, Willie walked back to the church, and Barker's wife followed.

Alice was found talking to Mrs. McShane, where Willie had left her when he started in pursuit of Barker.

"Oh, Miss Alice," cried the landlady, "I've found that dreadful man of mine, and they've taken him off to be buried."

"To be buried?" repeated Alice in surprise.

"Yes, he's going to the Tomb. I heard them say so."

"She means the Tombs perlice court," said Willie. "Johnny Jordan spotted him trying to swipe a watch, and he'll go up the river sure, now, and a good thing it is, too."

"Well, if he's going to prison, that's just as good," said Mrs. Thomas, "for then I can get married again, and not have to slave my life out keeping a lodging-house, and—"

"All right, mum," interposed Willie. "Give us the rest of it in the next edition. We ain't got time fur all that now."

Presently Jordan arrived, and Willie, Alice, Mrs. McShane and the landlady all got into the carriage and drove off.

The kind-hearted apple woman left the stand in charge of an associate in the business, for she would not have missed seeing Willie testify in court for a day's profits.

When they arrived at the Tombs Willie was surprised to find Hans Schneiderkopf standing outside with the monkey under his arm.

"Hallo, Dutchy, what are you doin' here?" asked our hero.

"Mein gootness, off dot yasn't leedle Willie!" exclaimed Hans. "Vell, I tolt you once, I got meinselluf in some droubles all along py dot funny peesness mit dot hand organ."

"Why, how was that, Hans?"

"Why, you see dot Italian vot owns dot organ what I dook for de rent once, he sawn me blay dot yesterday already, and he swear owit a baper on me for blaying mitout a license once."

"Oho, and you've come here to try the case, have you?"

"Ya, dot vas it, und I pring dot mongey mit me, so dot Katrina don'd gife him all dot free lunch once. Vas you got a case, too, Willie?"

"Yes, I've got a case," said Willie. "Come head in. I'll get you out, Hans, see if I don't."

Then Willie and his friends ascended the steps, and a few moments later, entered the crowded court-room in time to hear the clerk call out:

"The people against Harry James, grand lar-

ceny!"

"Ready for the prosecution!"

"Ready for the defense!"

"That's our case," whispered Willie to Hans.

"Now, then, Dutchy, if you want to see some tall squealin' on the other side, just stay and hear this case."

"Silence!" called out the crier, and the case of the people against Harry James was then put on trial.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OPENING OF THE TRIAL—JORDAN CAUSES A SENSATION.

"HARRY JAMES to the bar!"

The confidential clerk of Herbert Singleton, the banker, stepped up to the bar of the Tombs Police Court, to answer to the charge of grand larceny.

He saw Alice, Willie, Jordan, the detective, Mrs. McShane, and others of his friends sitting near him, while at the opposite side, within the railing, sat Mr. Singleton, his employer, wearing a stern and implacable look upon his sinister face.

The clerk of the court went through the ceremony of asking him his name, age, and occupation, read the charge, and then said:

"Prisoner at the bar, are you guilty or not guilty of the charge brought against you?"

"Not guilty!" said Harry, in a firm tone.

"Arrah, phwy don't they take his wurrud for it and let him go?" whispered Mrs. McShane to Alice.

The prosecuting attorney then arose, and, addressing the court, said:

"Your honor, the case against this young man is so clear that it seems almost a waste of time to summons any witnesses."

"I have plenty of time to spare," replied the judge, and Alice started at the sound of his voice.

"Perhaps you will want all the time you can get by and by," said Lawyer Russell, the attorney for the defense, and a titter went around the room.

"Call Herbert Singleton," interrupted the lawyer.

Then Mr. Singleton stepped up, took the stand, was sworn, and proceeded to give his evidence.

"That's Whiskers, the bloke that struck me twice in the street," whispered Willie to Hans. "I've got a bully surprise party for him when it comes my turn."

"Was dot der feller vat lock de gal oop once, Willie?" asked Hans.

"That's the bloke. Sh! I want to hear what he's saying now."

"You say that you suspected no one for a long time, Mr. Singleton?" asked the prosecuting attorney.

"I did not."

"Not even my client?"

"No. I had entire confidence in him. I did not think then that he was a thief."

"Never mind what you thought, Mr. Singleton," interposed Mr. Russell; "that is not relevant."

"We will cross that out," said the prosecuting attorney. "Go on with your story, Mr. Singleton."

The banker then told about finding the notes addressed to Harry James in the fire-place, of his sending for Jordan, and of the arrest.

"You suspected young James when you found the notes?" asked Mr. Russell.

"I did."

"You had previously had all confidence in him?"

"I had."

"Up to that very morning?"

"Yes," answered Singleton, with a hypocritical whine, "and the shock was dreadful."

"And yet, not knowing conclusively that he was guilty, you sent for a detective to be present when he opened his desk?"

"Yes," said Singleton, incautiously.

"Ah! You knew the money was there?" cried Lawyer Russell.

"No," said Singleton, firmly.

"Did you suspect that it was there?"

"No," was the answer as firmly as before, for Singleton realized the slip he had made, and resolved to be cautious.

"Why did you send for the detective?"

"Because I suspected he might have taken the money, and wished to give him a chance to confess. When it was found in his desk I had no alternative but to order his arrest."

"Could you not have talked with him quietly without having a detective in the room?"

"Mr. Jordan came before I expected him. I thought young James would be there first, but he was late, and Jordan arrived before him."

The letters were then put in evidence, and then Jordan testified as to the arrest and Harry's great nervousness at the time.

"Is that all your evidence?" asked Mr. Russell.

"It is."

"I thought so. Now, Your Honor, I mean to show you how flimsy all this is. Mr. Jordan, will you take the stand again, please?"

"Wait till you hear Johnny speak," whispered Willie. "I gave him p'int, I did."

"Pints off vat, Willie, pints off beer?" asked Hans.

Just then the monkey, who was getting restless, sprang out of Hans' arms, and jumped right up on the judge's desk.

"Is that a witness?" asked His Honor, smiling.

"He is fully as intelligent as some of the witnesses for the prosecution," observed Mr. Russell.

"Dot vas my mongey once, shudge," cried Hans, jumping up. "Dot mongey was brought me to dose court-house already."

"He seems to be at home here," said His Honor, "and at any rate, he does no harm."

The monkey was sitting quietly on the edge of the desk, watching the different faces beneath him, and now and then solemnly winking.

"Now, Mr. Jordan, you have heard about these notes addressed to Mr. James?" asked lawyer Russell.

"I have. They were given to me to read."

"By whom were they written?"

"By parties supposed to live in New York."

"Have you been able to find them?"

"I have not. They are not in the directory, and I can find no one of the same name who knows anything of either of them."

"Were the envelopes in which they came stamped or not?"

"They were unstamped and unsealed as well, and never went through the mail, apparently."

"Did you see the letters in the grate?"

"No; Mr. Singleton had them in his hand while he was telling me of his suspicions. He afterward picked the envelopes out of the grate."

"They were not burned?"

"No; merely crumpled."

"Now, Mr. Jordan, those notes were in your possession for some little time?"

"They were."

"And you had abundant time to examine the handwriting?"

"I had."

"Now, will you please compare the handwriting in this unfinished note, with that of the others?"

Lawyer Russell handed the detective a crumpled sheet of note-paper, which he placed alongside those on the attorney's desk.

"The handwriting is the work of the same person evidently, though that in the two notes is more disguised. All three bear some resemblance to each other."

"Have you ever seen this third note before?"

"I have. I picked it up off the floor close to Mr. Singleton's table on the morning of the arrest."

Singleton moved uneasily in his seat, and there was a general look of surprise in the faces of the spectators.

"What is this note?"

"A dunning letter unfinished. The wording is the same as that of the note put in evidence, as far as this one goes."

"And this note you found on the floor near where Mr. Singleton was sitting on the morning of the arrest?"

"Yes."

"You said nothing to him about it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I did not examine it till after the arrest. I have a habit of picking up odd bits of paper I find around. I thought this might prove of use, and so it has."

"What is your opinion of it?"

"That it and the other two were written by the same hand."

"I object!" cried the prosecuting attorney, springing to his feet. "Opinions are not evidence."

"Strike the evidence out," said the judge, quietly.

"I have experts on handwriting who will testify to the same thing," said Lawyer Russell. "It is one of the necessary acquirements of a detective to be able to identify handwritings. I appeal to your honor to allow this evidence to stand."

"What is its purport?" asked the judge, quietly.

"That will appear later on."

"To show the prisoner's innocence!"

"To show his accuser's guilt," cried the lawyer, firmly.

"Harry James is on trial. No one else," said the judge. "You are to prove his innocence—not another's guilt."

"That is all for the present, then, of these letters, but not of my evidence. Call Willie Rufus, and bid him come into the court."

"I'm here already," cried our hero, springing to his feet, "and ready to knock that bloke clean off'n his pins."

CHAPTER XVII.

WILLIE RUFUS ON THE STAND—UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENTS.

"Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?"

"Bet your life!"

"You must not answer in that way," cried the clerk, sternly, as Willie was about to be sworn.

"Look here, judge," cried the boy, "I don't know nuthin' 'bout these things and how they're done. I never was in a court before. Johnny Jordan asked me if I'd tell what I knowed about this case, and I said I would. I never told a lie yet, and I ain't a-goin' ter now."

"Do you understand the nature of an oath?"

"I understand that if I swear I'll tell the truth, and then don't do it, that I'll be jugged for it."

"Swear the witness."

Willie was then sworn, his answer to the formal question being less forcible than before.

Lawyer Russell then took him in hand, and asked:

"What is your name?"

"Willie Rufus."

"That is not your real name, is it?"

"It's the only one I ever remember."

"How old are you?"

"Goin' on sixteen."

"Where do you live?"

"Round in Greenwich street, now, with Mother McShane what keeps an apple stand in front of Trinity. Before that I lived in Baxter street with Frenchy, but I lit out o' there."

"What do you do for a living?"

"Black boots, sell papers, run errands, and do any odd jobs what turns up. I pay my board and Gerty's, too. Ask Mrs. Mac if I don't."

"Troth, thin, he do, and prompt to the minute," cried Mrs. McShane.

"Ya, dot poy Willie was so square like a house once," cried Hans, jumping up. "I vas lend him a quarter off a dollar und he bald me so quick as never vas. I drust him mit any amound."

"Silence!" said the judge, rapping on his desk.

That scared the monkey, who began to chatter and look frightened.

"Do you know the prisoner?" asked Lawyer Russell, when quiet had been restored.

"Yes, sir, and he didn't hook that money any more'n I did."

"Never mind that now," saw the lawyer, quickly. "Do you know the complainant?"

"Who's he?"

"Mr. Singleton."

"Oh, that's Whiskers. Bet yer life I know him. He clubbed me twice on the street, with his stick, jest fur nuthin'. He's a bad egg, and I've got suthin' to say about him what he won't like, the snoozer."

"My lad, you must confine yourself to the evidence," said the judge, "and not abuse the complainant."

"All right, judge, I won't, but I'd rather shin along my own way. I kin tell a straighter story than if I'm asked a hull lot o' questions."

"I demand that this witness be dismissed," said the prosecuting attorney. "It is not possible that a dirty, ragged urchin like him can know anything of this case."

"I guess yer nibbs 'll find out I know more'n ye think I do," answered Willie. "If yer tryin' to bluff me, it won't go down, so you might as well cheese it to start with. I know Harry James didn't put that money in his desk, 'cause I seen the feller what did it."

"Go on, Willie, and tell your story in your own way," said the judge kindly. "You street boys are not all the young vagabonds that people would like to make out."

"That's one on me, judge. When I get old enough to vote, I'll do all I kin to get you 'lected, if yer runnin' fur anything."

"Now, Willie," said Lawyer Russell.

"All right, pard, I'm ready."

Willie then leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, hung his hat on one foot, and began to tell his story.

"To get back to the fust of it, judge, I got acquainted with Harry James in Trinity church-

yard, when he used to go spark his gal, Miss Alice, down there.

"He gimme his card once, and told me if I ever wanted a job, to call on him, and I said I would, and so I did."

"Whiskers' over there, Singleton, I mean, put up a job to get Miss Alice away and shut up in a house up in Seventeenth street. I hadn't twigged the hull business then, but I knowed that Miss Alice was took away, and I—"

"What has this to do with the case?" thundered Singleton's lawyer. "Put this young vagabond out."

"I went down to see Harry James," continued Willie, "to tell him his girl had been took away. One of the funny ducks outside, in the office, told me where to find him, and I went into a little room down the hall."

"When I got in, I saw his nibbs, Whiskers over there, sittin' at a desk, and mumblin' to hisself, but didn't see nuthin' of Harry."

"I would ha' went out, but I heard that bloke over there say as how he'd get Harry James into prison sure, and that made me kinder want ter know what was up."

"I sneaked behind a fancy-thing what stood in a corner and his nibbs never knowed I was there, but went right on writin', and I stuck out my head and twigged what he was doin'."

"He writ two letters, mussed 'em all up and chucked 'em inter de fireplace, laughing to himself when he done it."

"Then he took a lot o' money out o' the safe, went over to Harry James' desk, opened it, and stuck the money inside."

"Your honor," cried Singleton, turning white, "is there no protection for me? Am I on trial?"

"Not yet," said the judge, sententiously.

"I move that this testimony be stricken out," cried the prosecuting attorney. "The witness is not a credible one. I wonder that you allow a ragged brat like that to come into this court and assail the character of a gentleman of high position, a banker, a man well known in business and social circles. I am astonished, I say, that Your Honor will permit—"

"We will hear what the boy has to say further about this matter," said the judge, quietly.

"Go on, Willie," said Lawyer Russell, encouragingly.

"I know what they're makin' all that fuss fur, yer Honor," said Willie, turning to the court. "They're tryin' to get me all muxed up, but they can't do it. I'm as fly as Whiskers, or the lawyer bloke, either, and I ain't goin' to stop till I git through, and that's straight."

"Lemme see; where was I? I seen Whiskers a-writin' letters an' mutterin' agin Harry, and—oh, yes, I've got it! He took the money out o' the safe, opened a desk, put the money in it, and locked it agin, puttin' the key in his own pocket."

"He reckoned he'd get Harry James into the Tombs and make off with the gal, that's what he said, and then he goes and sits down, and pretty soon in comes Johnny Jordan, the fly cop, and Whiskers tells him a lot o' lies about Harry."

"So help me, judge, I heard the whole business. I saw Singleton put the money in Harry's desk, and I saw Johnny arrest Harry when he opened the desk himself with his own key."

Singleton turned as white as death, bit his lip, and whispered something to the lawyer at his side.

"I wish to cross-examine this valuable witness," the prosecuting attorney said, with a sneer.

"Willie," said Lawyer Russell, "that gentleman wishes to ask you a few questions."

"All right. Go ahead, steam-boat," said the lad.

"What were you doing in Mr. Singleton's private office that morning?"

"I went to see Harry James, and the fellers outside told me to go there."

"How much did you steal during your stay in the office?"

Willie flushed for an instant, and then said quietly:

"It won't wash, cully. Yer tryin' to bluff me, to get me flabbergasted, so's I'll say suthin' I don't wanter what you can twist around to mean suthin' else. I ain't lived in New York fur nuthin', sonny, and don't yer forgit it."

"I have nothing to say to this hardened young reprobate," said the attorney, reddening. "I trust, however, that the jury will not give too much credence to his very transparent, unconvincing evidence."

The case was then given to the jury, who, without retiring from their seats, consulted together a few moments.

"Gentlemen, are you ready with your verdict?" asked the judge, as the foreman arose.

"We are, and our verdict is that the prisoner is not guilty, and so say we all."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VERDICT—SINGLETON'S ARREST AND FLIGHT.

"NOT GUILTY!"

That was the verdict, and when the spectators heard it they could not repress their emotions.

"By Shiminies! dot vas bedder dan a kick by der sthomick!" cried Hans, jumping up and waving his hands.

"Begorrah, that was a foine spache that Willie med," cried Mrs. McShane, enthusiastically. "It was him that got the bye off."

"Silence!" cried the judge, pounding on his desk.

That scared the monkey again and he jumped off and ran over the heads of the spectators.

"Ach, mein mongey was got away once," cried Hans. "Forst ha-fetch me by dot Tombs, und den he runs away und makes me drubbles."

"Prisoner, you are honorably discharged," said the judge. "Call the next case, Nicolini against Schneiderkopf."

"Ya, dot was me," cried Hans, stepping forward. "Vere was dot Italian schnoozer once?"

Somebody caught the monkey and gave it to Hans, who tucked the frightened animal under his arm and stepped up to the rail.

Harry James now joined his friends, shook hands with Willie, kissed Alice, smiled on Mrs. McShane, and greeted Jordan cordially.

"Willie, my boy, you have saved me from a prison," he said, fervently. "How can I ever thank you enough?"

"Well, if yer can't, I wouldn't try," said Willie. "Look out, Johnny; his nibs is goin' out," he whispered to Jordan.

"I'll look out for him," muttered the detective. Then hurrying out, he overtook Singleton as he was going down the steps.

"I am under the necessity of arresting you on a charge of conspiracy, Mr. Singleton," he said, putting his hand on the banker's shoulder.

"Where is your warrant?" demanded Singleton, haughtily.

Jordan produced the necessary paper, having already taken the precaution to have it issued.

"That appears to be quite regular," sneered Singleton. "I will give bail."

"You will have to remain in my custody until that time," responded Jordan.

"I do not intend to run away, sir," snapped Singleton.

"Don't you let him go, Johnny," cried Willie, who now approached. "Lock the snoozer up. It'll serve him right fur all he done to de rest of us."

"I will return with you and settle the matter at once," said the banker, coldly. "My time is valuable."

"De best thing you kin do is to go down to de river and drown yerself, Whiskers," said Willie, scornfully. "Yer ain't no good, and ye can't travel on yer fine looks. Take my advice and go hire somebody to shoot yer."

"Silence, you young vagabond!" cried Singleton, angrily, as he turned and accompanied Jordan into the gloomy building.

Meanwhile Harry went home with Alice, and the rest started off alone, when Willie saw Hans come running down the steps, the monkey under his arm.

"Shtop a leedle, Willie," he said. "Dot case was saddled once."

"Did you beat the Italian?" asked Willie, becoming interested.

"Did I beat him? Nein, I don't could do dot ven he wasn't dere once. Off I sawn him already. I punch his snood."

"Ah, I mean did you get your case?" said Willie, laughing at, and yet disgusted with Hans' stupidity.

"Ya, I got me dot case, I expect. Vas it a glass case? Off it vas, I put dot mongey in it. Dot Italian don'd come around already, und der shudge told me I was discharged once."

"Then you got the suit by default?"

"Nein, it wasn't my fault. It was dot Italian's fault once, und I lose me an hour already, und Katrina vas been laefing und talking mit dem schnoozers von Bleeker street, I bidde you."

"Well, I'm glad you got free. What yer going to do with the monk?"

"Ach! I sold him mit a mooseum. I lose me more as two dollars a day by dot monkey already. Off I don't sold him, I cut him up for free lunch."

"Well, so long, Hans: See you later," and off skipped Willie to join Mrs. McShane.

In the meantime, Singleton was detained while he was obtaining bail, it being necessary to send for two men to go on his bond.

He was put under heavy bonds, and matters were all arranged and Singleton about to depart when, as he was leaving the Tombs, Harry James stepped up with a policeman, and said:

"This is the man, officer."

"Mr. Singleton, I have a warrant for your arrest," said the policeman.

"You are too late, young man," said Sing' ton, with a sneer. "This matter is already settled."

"I think not," replied Harry. "This is a charge of abduction, preferred by Miss Baldwin."

Just then Jordan came out, and the banker turned upon him fiercely, with:

"You knew about this second charge. Why didn't you make them both at once?"

"I knew nothing about it," said Jordan, quietly. "I presume you can get bail easily enough, though, for your friends have not gone yet."

Singleton returned to the court-room, and after more delay, gave bail for his appearance to answer the second charge against him.

"Confound the whole business," he growled, as he finally left the Tombs, jumped into a carriage and was driven to the bank, "it's all the fault of that boy. I'd like to wring his neck. The judge was against me, of course, as I might have known. Then I was a fool to throw that half written note away instead of destroying it."

However, it was too late now to think of these things, for he had been beaten at every point and was under heavy bonds to answer two very grave charges.

If convicted of either of them, as he might easily be, it meant a long term in States Prison, if both charges were pressed and sentences passed in each case, the chances against him were greater still.

It was in no enviable frame of mind, therefore, that he returned to the bank and resumed business.

He had meant to crush Harry James and secure Alice, but now Harry was triumphant and Alice had escaped him.

"It's all that boy's doings," he muttered. "I ought to have broken his neck the first time I met him instead of simply caning him. I owe all my defeat to him. I'll pay him for it, though. I must see Pierre and get him to put the young ruffian out of the way."

The more he thought over the matter, however, the darker his prospects seemed.

His business would be ruined, there would be a run upon the bank, and all his ill-gotten wealth be swept away from him.

His society friends would shun him, once he was poor, and life would not be worth the living.

Then he decided to do what only a coward and a villain would do, run away and leave his bondsmen in the lurch.

"If the bank is going under, I may as well make all I can," he muttered.

His preparations were quickly made, for he resolved to lose no time whatever.

There was always plenty of ready money in the bank, but on this day there happened to be more than usual.

During the afternoon he managed to turn many thousands of dollars of securities into money, while those that were easily negotiable he took with him.

When he left the bank at five o'clock, having previously sent the clerks home early, he took with him an ample fortune, and left the bank nearly stripped.

Two stout valises served to hold the bills and securities and what little clothing he wanted, for he would not bother himself with specie or gold, and he could easily purchase a wardrobe on his travels.

When the evening train for Montreal left the Grand Central depot, Mr. Herbert Singleton was on board, snugly ensconced in a corner of one of the sleeping cars, and no one was any the wiser.

"They've beat me, but not cornered me," he muttered as the train sped through the tunnel, "and if I'm a rogue it's one comfort to know that it takes a smart man to be one."

CHAPTER XIX.

LOTTERS AT WORK—TWO DECOY MESSAGES—GONE!

In a quiet back room of a saloon up-town Mr. Tom Barker and Mr. Pierre Bertrand sat discussing their plans over a bottle and a couple of glasses.

"So, so! You don't like ze lower end of ze eety, *mon cher* Tom?" asked the Frenchman.

"Bet yer life I don't," growled Tom, lighting a malodorous pipe and puffing out great clouds of smoke.

"Madame Barkaire, she make it too warm for you, hein?"

"Yes, de ole woman got me locked up, but she didn't show up to make a complaint, and I got out."

"Then you keep out of her way, eh, my friend?"

"Betcher life. Then dere's dat kid, Willie. He's too fly."

"Aha, leetle Willie! *oui, oui*, he's ze imp of ze diable; he spoil all my leetle plans. Bettaire zat I should steek ze knife in him when I hafe ze chance."

"Well, if yer wanter make a stake, why don't yer collar der kid agin and tell his nibbs yer want some money?"

"Aha, Meestaire Tom! you hafe ze great head, but eet ees not beeg enoaf."

"Why ain't it?" growled Tom, smoking vigorously.

"Eef you take ze shild you have to run across leetle Willie, and he ees ze diable. He bloak all your leetle games, *mon ami*."

"Naw he won't if yer work it right. Look a-here, you can write good United States, if yer can't speak it, can't yer?"

"*Oui mon cher* Tom, I write like ze *secrétaire*."

"Well, den, what's de matter wid gittin' der boy out o' de way on a false scent, and den collarin' de kid while he's off?"

"Ver' good, Meestaire Tom, but zere is ze old woman, Madame McShane, ze peddlaire of ze apples at ze church of ze Trinitee at ze top of ze Wall street."

"Ah, you can get Mrs. Mac out o' de way easy enough. Send one of de boys in de neighborhood wid a message to her dat somebody's sick. That'll fetch her fust rate."

"Suppose ze Madame McShane take ze child wiz her when she go out?"

"Ah, s'posin de house falls down! Yer s'posin' too much. Yer gotter take some risk, ain't yer?"

"*Oui, mon ami*, zere ees reesk and zat ees why I look out for troble in advance."

"Yes, yer look fur too much trouble, dat's what yer do. Why don't you go ahead like I do, slap bang, and don't care for nobody?"

"Zat ees ver' good for you, Meestaire Tom, but I am ze different sort. I am like ze cat zat watch and keep steel and zen *piff!* all on ze sudden she jomps out and zere is ze pore rat fast, while you are like ze bull, which make a beeg noise and throw up hees tail and stomp on ze ground and fright away ze man he want to toss in ze air, *mon cher*."

"Ah, that be blowed! I'd rather be a bull any day than a cat. De bull'd knock spots out'n a cat."

"Well, we vill not quarrel, Meestaire Tom. I write ze lettaire eef you get for me ze papaire and ze ink. Who sall we say want to see ze leetle Willie?"

"De Dutchman, I guess."

"Hein! ze Dutchman no can write ze good English! He speek heem like ze brute. *Ma foi*, hafe you of your sense taken leave?"

"Write it just as if de Dutchman had got anoder feller to write for him. Dat's de way to do it."

"Diable? zat is ver' good, my dear Tom. You are ze great generale. Meestaire Singleton should employ you to do hees business."

"Dat's all right; I'm makin' money for both of us, ain't I?"

"*Oui oui*, you make us reech, and zat ees what we loafe, *on ami*. Where we take ze leetle gal, hein?"

"Any place. Put her in your den fust off, till yer kin tip de gov'nor. How about de oder gal we ran off wid for him?"

"I do not know. I see heem *ds* ain in ze morning, and I ask heem."

Tom then called the proprietor in and procured pens, ink and writing paper, for which Pierre paid.

Then the two rascals worked upon their newest scheme until it was entirely to their satisfaction, and promised to be successful.

An hour later, as Willie Rufus was sitting in Mrs. McShane's tidy kitchen, eating his supper, Gerty by his side, and the applewoman opposite, there came a rap at the hall door.

"Begob, who's that comin' to see me at this toime?" cried the good woman, jumping up.

"Mebbe it's Singleton comin' to ax me to go his bail," said Willie. "We just nailed his nibbs this mornin', and I reckon he won't go botherin' us any more."

"Faix it war ye that flured him intoirely, me bye," said Mrs. McShane, as she passed from the kitchen to the room beyond.

She presently returned with a note, which she handed to Willie, saying:

"Here's a letherfor ye that wan av thim messenger boys brought. He says it's purtickler."

Willie opened the note, and read as follows:

"DEAR WILLIE, come up to my place at once. I have news for you of the most important. This is written by a customer of mine. Yours truly,

"HANS."

"Wonder what the Dutchman wants?" thought Willie. "Maybe he knows suthin' about the

Frenchman. Guess I'll go up. Where's the feller what fetched the letter?"

"Faix, he's gon'," said Mrs. McShane. "He said there was tin cints to pay on it, but I wudn't give it to um. I know thim lads, they do be shpendin' all their money an' cigarettes and taffy, an' I'll not encourage thim in wastefulness. Why don't they save their money an' put it in the bank?"

"Yes, an' let some feller like his nibbs, Whiskers, get away with the hull of it some day. I'm goin' up-town, missis, but I'll be back early. The Dutchman wants to see me."

"Faix, yez haven't ate yer supper yet, bye. Ye'll not go away hungry?"

"Oh, I'm all right, Missis Mac. I won't starve. Skip the gutter; good-night, Gerty."

"You won't go chasing after those bad men and get hurt, will you, Willie?" said the child.

"Bet yer life I won't. Good-night, little sweet-heart, and don't you go to frettin'."

Willie kissed the child, threw on his hat and was off like a shot running as far as the Astor House, and then boarding a Sixth avenue car just leaving for up-town.

Mrs. McShane had finished her supper, washed and put away her dishes, and tidied up the room, when there came another rap at the door, and this time a most loud and imperative one.

"Begorrah, I've plinty av company the night," muttered Mrs. McShane, as she answered the summons.

An untidy-looking boy was in the hall, and when the door opened he said, excitedly:

"Mrs. Mac, me mudder sent for me to tell yer to come round. She's awful sick, and she says yer de on'y one what kin do her any good."

"Who are ye?" muttered the woman. "I don't seem to remember yez, but thin there's a great many byes in the neighborhood."

"It's Tommy McNally, an' me mudder lives around de corner, in de Murphy flats."

"An' is she very sick, me bye?"

"Yes'm; she's took awful bad, an' if y' don't come right away it won't be no use."

"Troth, I'll go this minyute. Wait here a second, and I'll put on me shawl."

Then the good woman hurried back into the kitchen, grabbing her hood and shawl from a closet on the way.

"I'm goin' out for a while, Gerty, child, but I won't be long," she said, hurriedly. "Shtay right where ye are, and don't go away till Willie comes. He'll be here soon, and mebbe I'll be back furst, anyhow."

"Can't I go too?" said Gerty.

"No, for it's in a sick room I'm going, and I'd be afraid ye'd catch the fever or something else. I'll not be gone long, so don't worrit."

Then Mrs. McShane hurried back again, and accompanied the boy down-stairs to the street.

"War yer mother took suddenly, Tommy?" she asked.

"Yes'm, dreadful sudden, an' she eud hardly speak to tell me to go fur yer. Nobody knowed nuthin' what ter do but you, she said, and I run me legs off goin' fur yer."

This was not the first time that the kind-hearted woman had gone out to attend to some sick neighbor, and it caused her no surprise to be called out this way at the present time.

It was dark in the street now, and there were plenty of people going to and fro, bent on various errands, so that the progress of the applewoman and her guide was somewhat slow.

Finally, however, they turned the corner and entered a large tenement house, the front door of which always stood open.

"Go right up, Mrs. Mac," said the boy. "I've gotter go to de druggist's first, but I won't be long. You know de room, don't yer?"

"Faith I do, and it's obliged I am to ye for comin' so far wid me, for the crowds is that great I'd ha' been run over a dozen thimes if ye hadn't been wid me."

Then she went up to Mrs. McNally's rooms where, greatly to her surprise, she found the woman herself sitting up and in apparently the best of health.

"Good avenin', Mrs. McShane," she cried. "Troth, it's quite a stranger ye are. Take aff yer things. Michael, send out for a pint."

"Ye're soon over yer ailin', I think," said the apple woman, blankly. "Was it only because ye wanted to see me socially that ye sint for me in such a hurry, wid such a message?"

It was now Mrs. McNally's turn to be surprised. "Sure I niver sint for ye, Mrs. McShane, though I'm always glad to see ye, and I've had no troubles that I know av."

"Ye worn't taken sick?"

"No, indeed."

"And yez didn't send yer son Tommy around for me in a turrible hurry?"

"Me son Tommy! Faix, me son Tommy is a

man grown, and is at this very minyute away out in Californy."

"There's no ither McNallys in the house?" gasped Mrs. McShane.

"There's not, but ye needn't be in a hurry, Mrs. McShane. Stay and have a chat."

"Somebody's been playing thricks on me, Mrs. McNally, and usin' ye as a bloind. I can't stop a minyute. I know something's gone wrong; and I must hurry back. If annything's happened the choild, I'll niver forgive meself fur laving her."

Then the excited woman hurried out of the house and back to her own, losing no time, in spite of the throng in the street.

Hurrying breathlessly up the stairs, she entered her rooms, where she needed not a second glance to tell her that the child was gone!

CHAPTER XX.

CROSS PURPOSES—WILLIE'S CONCLUSIONS—ON THE TRACK.

WILLIE RUFUS reached Hans Schneiderkopf's saloon on Bleeker street in half an hour's time, and found the honest German standing behind the bar waiting on his customers.

There were a good many of them, and both Hans and Katrina were very busy.

"Fader, dere was Willie once," said Katrina as the boy entered, Hans being engaged in drawing beer.

"How you do, Willie?" said Hans, coming out from behind the bar with a handful of mugs, all running over with foaming beer.

"Pretty well—how's yourself?"

"I was fine. De factory hants round de corner was paid off to-night. I wish you could draw dot beer once, I gif you a shob. Maybe you like to wait on dem gustomers?"

"Is that what yer sent for me for to come up in such a tearin' hurry?" asked Willie, slightly provoked.

"I didn't sent for you at all already," said Hans, putting down the beer.

"You didn't?" and Willie's tone indicated incredulity.

"I tolt you dot once—fife von ten mages fife—don't you got someding smaller as two dollars? De change was scarce to-night."

His reply to Willie was uttered in a surly tone, and then he turned to make change, ignoring the boy entirely.

"Two more beers here, Hans," cried a man at a table in a corner.

"Three beers here, Dutchy."

"Ya, I prings dem ride away. Katrina, took dem embdy classes once."

"Then you don't want to see me?" said Willie, as Hans started back behind the bar.

"Ya, I was glat to sawn you any dime, only I was putty busy just now already. Off you vipe off der dables and bick up der classes, you oblige me putty much I dinks."

"Thank yer, I ain't waitin' in a beer saloon nowadays," muttered Willie, petulantly.

"Vell, I was sorry once, but off you got somedings to say, you petter say it now once, for dot rush was coming."

Then Hans drew some more beer, and Katrina carried the glasses around and took change.

"I reckon it's you what wants to say suthin', after sendin' for a feller to come way up here."

"I don't was send for you already, und I tolt you dot before once," cried Hans, getting mad.

"You didn't eh? Then who sent me this ere note?"

Willie thrust the note he had received under the man's nose as he said this.

"Vat was dose?"

"The note you got a customer to write for you, and what fetched me here."

Hans dropped a mug of beer in his astonishment.

"Dot note was von me once?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Was dot in Cherman?"

"No."

"Vell, I don'd write dot English."

"No, but you got a customer to do it."

"Read me dot once."

Willie read the note, and Hans looked more astonished than ever.

"I don't know nodings about dot!" he cried.

"Dot was a swindle. I nefer wrode nodings. Some shnoozler was blay you dricks."

"I've got it!" cried Willie, excitedly. "It's a put up job to get me out of the way, and then them duffers is goin' to run off with Gerty."

"Who was dot?"

"The little gal I saved from bein' chucked in the river, and was 'most run over for. Pierre is trying to get her again and he wrote that 'ere note, the duffer."

"Dot was der Frenchman, once?"

"Yes."

"Himmel! I don'd like dese Frenchmen. De

Chermans lieted them once in dot war und my broder was killed already. I punch dot Frenchman mit der snood, off I catch him once."

"That's what he's done, I'll bet a dollar. I'd like to know for sure, though, maybe he's taken her to his place in Baxter street. I'll chance it, blowed if I don't."

Then Willie dashed out, leaving Hans to wait on his customers, and presently boarded a Bleeker street car going down-town.

"I'll bet anything that he don't know about Singleton, and has done this job to make more money," he muttered, as he rode along.

"Maybe Whiskers has got him to do it, seein' as he didn't get through with the job on Harry James or the other one on Miss Alice. He's bound to get rid of Gerty, so's he can hang on to the money that old—Oh, bother! why can't I remember that feller's name. Whiskers was his friend, and he lived in Paris. If I only knowed it I might advertize for his relations."

Willie did not know of Singleton's flight at this time any more than Pierre, and he naturally connected the man with Gerty's disappearance.

He was not certain that the child had been taken away, but he knew that nobody but Pierre would send a letter like that, and argued from this that the man was up to mischief.

"If Tom Barker wasn't in the Tombs, I might think he had suthin' to do with the job," he mused, "and the best place to look would be up at the bridge, but he's jugged."

He did not know either, that Barker had been discharged, but this only simplified matters, whereas, on the other hand, he would have been puzzled to know where to look for the missing child.

By the time Willie had finished his musings, the car was rattling down Crosby street, and just turning into Howard on its way to Center.

"Hallo, I've most got there," he muttered, looking out. "Guess I'd better get out at Canal and run down Baxter at the square."

When the car passed Canal street, he jumped out and hurried to the junction of Walker, Baxter and Canal streets, turning down the unsavory thoroughfare known as Baxter avenue, and hurrying on toward the den occupied by Pierre.

The street was not crowded at this time of night, for it was cool out of doors, and the house was preferable to the sidewalk at this time.

When Willie reached the cellar, formerly occupied by the Frenchman, he found everything shut up tight and looking as though the premises were vacant.

"Wonder if Frenchy has moved?" he mused. "I can't see no sign of a light in the place."

Then he crept down the steps and put his eye to the key-hole of the closed door, but could see nothing.

"I don't hear nuthin', maybe he's moved since I was up here last, the old fox. Reckon he thought I'd put the cops on him."

At that moment footsteps were heard coming along the quiet street, and with them the muffled sound of voices.

Willie's quick ear at once detected in the voices, that of Pierre Bertrand himself.

"By jingo! there he is now," he muttered, and, as quick as a flash he crouched down in the darkest corner, awaiting Pierre's approach.

CHAPTER XXI.

PIERRE AND TOM—ON THE ALERT—GERTY FOUND—FIRE!

"OUI, oui, Meestaire Tom, zat vas ver' clevalro, and you salf hafe anozer drink, eef you like."

"Well, what yer want to get out fur, then, if yer goin' to stand treat?"

"Hein! I do not like ze wine or ze viskey off ze Baxtaire street. You salf hafe some off my own. Aha, mon cher, zat oes ze stuff. Eet ees bettaire zan ze rotgoat of ze rue de Baxtaire, as you call him."

Tom Barker and Pierre Bertrand were walking along Baxter street, below Canal, at ten o'clock at night, the street being nearly deserted.

"There's your old place, ain't it?" asked Tom as they passed some steep steps leading to a cellar.

"Oui, oui, but I zink ze place was too hot, you compr'end, and so I moave away."

"That's where you had the kid fust off?"

"Oui, oui, but zat little rascal, Willie, run away wiz her. Hein! I turn ze furniture on ze leetle villain to-night."

"Bet yer life, and we want to see that he don't get the brat away from us agin."

The two rogues passed on, and Willie crept out of the cellar entrance and looked after them.

"Frenchy and Tom, eh?" he muttered. "Wonder how he got out o' the jug? They are got Gerty, sure enough, an' they're goin' to have another drink over it."

The two ruffians were now several rods in ad-

vance, and the boy hurried after them, keeping in the shadows as much as possible and making no more noise than was absolutely necessary.

Most of the stores were closed, but here and there one was open, and sent a glare of light out into the street.

At such points Willie accelerated his pace, as to avoid being seen, keeping an eye on the men ahead of him at the same time.

"They must be going to Frenchy's new place now," muttered Willie, "and I reckon I'm dead onto 'em. Blowed if I'll give it up now."

They were now in a darker and less frequented part of the street, not far from the once famous but now very commonplace Five Points, and Pierre and Tom suddenly paused in front of a two story and a half building of a most tumble down appearance.

"Gerty is in there, I bet," mused the boy. "They took her there and then went out to get a drink on it, the snoozers. It's mighty lucky I tumbled to 'em, and that I got down here just when I did."

The building before which the two scoundrels stood was rather a peculiar one.

It had once been used as a warehouse of some description, but was now standing idle.

From a beam projecting from the roof hung a rope, once used for hoisting and lowering goods, the ends passing through a broken pane of glass in the upper story.

The door on the second floor, where goods had formerly been taken in, was boarded up, and evidently had not been opened for some little time.

On the ground floor the large middle doors were also closed, entrance to the place being had through a smaller door at one side, which opened upon a flight of stairs leading above.

There were two windows on the first floor, another over the side door, between the first and second stories, two on the second, one on either side of the large door, and one in the gable or half story above.

The beam with its dangling rope, projected at the angle of the pointed roof, and the rope passed through the one window in the upper story.

Willie noticed all these details, for he meant to rescue Gerty, and wanted to get the lay of the land in advance.

"That's the old oil warehouse," he muttered, as he stood on the other side of the street, and watched the place. "It ain't been used for some time, and I reckon Frenchy got it cheap. Nobody but a duffer like him would live in such a dirty, greasy place."

Presently he saw a light appear at the small window, over the door, between the first and second floors.

"That winder lights the hall and stairs, I reckon. They must be goin' up, and they've struck a match."

Presently the light appeared in one of the windows of the second story, and remained stationary.

"Guess they must be havin' their drink now," mused Willie, after watching the light for some time. "Hope they'll both get full, and then I'll have a show."

The light remained fixed, but it was evident that the men were behind it and at some distance from the window, as neither they nor their shadows could be seen.

At the end of an hour the light had not moved, nor had the men come down.

"They must be putty full; guess I'll risk it," muttered Willie.

The street was now dark and deserted. The lights from the few saloons still open being all that was to be seen, save that solitary light in the old warehouse.

Willie crossed the street, tried the side door, found it ajar, pushed it open and entered.

Up the stairs he crept with the greatest caution, till he reached the second story.

A long hall ran the whole depth of the building and was lighted by a window in the rear.

In front was a rough, unceiled stairway, leading to the upper floor, and a door near the foot of it opened into a room in the front of the building.

Willie peeked through the key-hole and saw Tom Barker and Pierre sitting before a square table of rough pine, on which stood a light kerosene lamp, a bottle, and two glasses.

In one corner was a tumbled bed, and near an old and very dirty wardrobe—this being the extent of the furnishing of the room.

"Reckon she's up-stairs," thought Willie, he crept noiselessly up the rough and greasy steps.

At the top was a small, square hall, and in front was a door, which Willie tried and found locked.

"Go away, you bad man," cried a child's voice from behind the door.

It was Gerty who had spoken, and Willie's heart gave a bound.

Putting his mouth to the key-hole, the boy whispered:

"It's me, Willie Rufus, come to take you away. Let me in."

"I can't," cried Gerty, hurrying to the door. "It's locked."

"Then I'll settle that," and with no thought of the consequences, Willie threw himself against the door, and burst it open.

"Come, sis, there's no time to waste," he cried, catching Gerty in his arms.

Then there was a confused murmur below, a tramp of feet, a crash, and then a wild cry.

"Fire!"

The lamp had been upset, and the old oil warehouse was already in flames.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FIRE IN THE OLD OIL WAREHOUSE—PERIL OF WILLIE AND GERTY.

"FIRE!"

What more startling cry is there than this when heard at the dead of night?

It arouses all one's terror, and he must be cool-headed indeed who can hear it suddenly at such a time without being unnerved.

To Willie Rufus the cry had double terrors, for not only was his own life in danger but that of the child whom he had come to the old rookery to rescue.

"That big fool has upset the lamp!" he gasped, "and this greasy wood will burn like a box o' matches."

He had rightly guessed the cause of the fire.

Pierre and Tom, sitting by the table in that wretched room, with the lamp in front of them, had been drinking and talking for the past hour.

Tom was beginning to get stupid and drowsy, having already had a good many drinks before coming down to Baxter Street.

Pierre, on the contrary, was so used to drinking this sort of liquor, French brandy, that he was in his normal condition.

For the twentieth time Tom had been saying what a clever thing the night's work had been.

"Bulliest thing we ever did, m' fren', if I say so. Fust, we get Willie off on a wil' goose chase n' then th' ole woman."

"And zen we go in, whistling like ze little Willie, and ze shild come running to ze door, we put ze coat ovaire' her head, we stoap her noise, and we bring her to zis place. Heinal you hafe told me zat twenty times, mon cher Tom."

"Well, that's the way we done it, ain't it?" growled Tom, helping himself to another drink.

"Oui, oui, zat ees ze way, mais mon ami, I hafe been zere myself and eet ees not new to me. Bettaire you should go to bed and sleep."

"Well, les' have 'nother drink fust n' the I will."

He was just lifting the glass to his lips with an unsteady hand when there came a crash on the floor above.

"Diable! vat ees zat?" cried Pierre, springing up. "Ze shild hafe escape."

As Pierre rushed to the door Tom leaped to his feet, staggered heavily against the table, struck the lamp and hurled it to the floor.

The lamp, being of glass, broke in a hundred pieces, the oil ran out, was ignited, and in an instant ran over the floor in a fiery stream.

The woodwork, saturated with oil and dirt, took fire in a second; in fact, scarcely half that time seemed to elapse before the whole place was in a blaze.

The sudden sense of danger seemed to half-sober the drunken Tom, and he rushed to the window, dashed out a pane of glass and yelled:

"Fire! fire! the house is on fire!"

"Diable! what you do?" cried Pierre, fumbling at the lock. "You raise all ze neighborhood. We must get ze shild away forst. Vat care-f for ze house? Zat ees nossing to me, ze shild ees efery-sing."

He seemed to have lost his head, while Tom was perfectly cool.

"Drat the young un, we've got to get out o' here," growled Tom. "Let her burn! You'll get your money all the same."

The flames had spread with alarming rapidity, then the floor, walls and ceiling were now all aglow.

"Fire!" yelled Tom again, leaning far out of the window.

How quickly the cry seemed to have been heard and taken up!

It was repeated in an instant from the street.

Pierre had now opened the door and was in the hallway.

Already the flames had burst through the partition in the rear, and were racing over the floors and along the greasy wooden walls.

A mass of dense black smoke filled the hall, and Pierre could scarcely breathe.

Not a minute had elapsed since the breaking of the lamp, but already was the tumbledown old place doomed.

Willie came half way down the stairs, saw Pierre and Tom, and retreated.

Then the smoke and flames drove him back, and still grasping the child in his arms, he hurried back to the loft.

Faster and faster yet rushed the fire over the floor, the walls, the ceilings, and up and down the greasy steps.

Tom again shouted an alarm, and then rushed into the hall, seized Pierre, and half dragged, half pushed him along the passage to the steps.

The smoke hung in dense clouds all about them, the flames were everywhere.

"Get out!" yelled Tom, giving the Frenchman a shove, and sending him, feet first, down-stairs.

A second later he followed, and then, as the two burst open the door and rushed into the street, a mass of flame rushed from the second story windows.

"Fire!" shouted many voices, a crowd now rapidly gathering.

"Clang; clang!" rang out the fire-bells.

"Clatter, clatter, clatter!" sounded the steel-shod hoofs of the fire-engine horses as they dashed down the narrow street.

Ring of bells, roar of flames, clatter of hoofs, tramp of many feet, shrieks of frightened women, shouts of men, shrill cries of boys.

The din and confusion was most appalling.

From the second story windows, from the little window over the side door and from the great double doors poured flame and smoke.

The engines came rushing up, but the men are driven back by the heat of the flames.

At this moment the window in the loft is burst open, and a shower of glass falls to the ground.

A mass of flame bursts forth, and is then driven back by a current of air.

At this instant two figures appear in the window and are thrown out in bold relief by the lurid glare of the flames.

They are Willie Rufus and Gertie.

The old rookery is one mass of flames, below them roars and rages a seething, fiery furnace.

But one avenue of escape is left.

The rope!

It is well that Willie had noticed all the details before entering the house.

The rope, passing through the broken pane, lies in a coil on the floor.

Willie dashes out the flimsy sash, seizes the rope and throws it to the ground.

Then springing upon the window-ledge, with Gerty by his side, he clasps her firmly with one arm, seizes the rope, clings to it with feet and hand and throws himself forward.

Both parts are together, and there is no danger of its slipping out of the pulley above.

Then down the rope he swiftly glides, the child clasped tightly to his breast.

A moment later flames burst from every window and door in the place.

As he touches the sidewalk, a wild cheer is heard from hundreds of throats.

Then the rope is seen to be in flames, and an instant later, it falls to the ground in the very spot where Willie had stood but a moment before.

Both he and the child are safe, however, and hundreds of voices proclaim the fact.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE NEWS OF THE DAY—WILLIE THINKS HE HAS A CLEW.

"Oh, I say, Mrs. Mac, what d'ye s'pose has happened?"

It was the afternoon of the day succeeding the fire in the old warehouse on Baxter street.

Mrs. McShane is sitting at her apple stand in front of old Trinity, when Willie comes rushing along with the above question on his lips.

Gerty is sitting by the apple woman's side, for neither she nor Willie will now allow her out of their sight.

"Faix, I dunno," replies Mrs. McShane. "There do be a great many things happenin' those days."

"Oh, well, can't yer guess?"

"They've cot the Frenchman?"

"No."

"They've nominated the Dutchman for Alderman?"

"No, though he's worth it," replied Willie, with a laugh.

"Faix then, I dunno phwat it is."

"Ah, give a guess," persisted Willie.

"Miss Alice is goin' to be married?"

"Some day, I reckon, but that ain't it."

"Mr. Harry is to be med prident av the bank?"

"Now yer getting warmer; guess again."

"Ah, go an wid yez. D'ye think I'm a fortune teller? What is it annyhow?"

"Whiskers has jumped his bail and skipped out, and the bank has busted."

"The fellow that hed Misther Harry took up, do yez mane?"

"Yes, Singleton; he's lit out and took a lot o' money with him, and they think he's gone to Canada."

"Faix, then, he'll have company, for that's where all the rogues go."

"He'd orter taken my advice and gone off and killed hisself," said Willie, greatly disgusted.

"Sure, that 'ud be murder, an' they'd hang him for't, me bye."

"Well, if he made a good job of it, I reckon they wouldn't do nuthin' to him," chuckled Willie.

"Arrah, how c'ud they av he killed hisself? Faix, I didn't think about that."

"Well, he's skipped and the bank is busted, and lots o' fellers loses money by it. He didn't have any o' my pile. I don't do business with snide concerns like dat. My money's all in de gov'ment bonds."

"Faix, if it's in bonds, it must be tied up thin," said Mrs. McShane, with a wink.

"Hallo, Missis Mac, guess you must've been readin' the funny papers or the comic almanacs. If you told Dutchy that joke, he wouldn't see it for half a day, and then, like enough, he'd laugh just when yer was all cryin' over suthin' sad and weepy."

"Faith, thin, av the bank's broke, phwat's Mr. Harry goin' to do? He'll be out of a job."

"Well, yer don't s'pose he'd go to work fur Whiskers agin, after the dirty turn he done him, do yer?"

"No, I s'pose not; he has more sins than that, but he's got to do something, I persume, seein' that it's not a millionaire he is."

"Ah, he'll get a job. But I've got more'n that to tell yer."

"Phwat is it?"

"Whiskers left a lot o' papers, and now we know who Gerty is."

"Do yez, faith?"

"Why, you know whom I am now, don't you?" said the child, "I'm Gerty; everybody knows that."

"So they do, sis; but they don't know who yer folks is, nor where they are, and that's what we want to find out."

"And do Singleton's papers tell it?" asked the apple woman.

"They say she's the child of Victor Pilot, a Frenchman, what was killed in Paris, the time they had the riots there. That's the name. I couldn't remember. Frenchy said it, but I couldn't get onto it the fust time."

"Well, if the poor choild's father is dead, he's no good to us at all."

"Of course he ain't, but don't yer s'pose he's got brothers or sisters or suthin' somewhere?"

"Yes, and they'll take Gerty away from us, and we a-thinkin' the wurruld av her."

"Here, stop cryin' on them wolien socks yer knittin'. Ye'll take all the color out of 'em. P'raps her folks is rich and we've no right to keep her out of her fortune. I'm goin' to put a piece in the paper about it, and see if I kin find 'em to-morrer."

"Did they catch the Frenchman yet?" asked Mrs. McShane.

"No, him and Tom ran away when the place got on fire, and they ain't seen nuthin' of either of 'em since."

"An' wor the house all burned down?"

"Every bit of it, clean to the ground. It was a good thing the hull street didn't go, too, but the injines stopped that."

"An' ye shild down oh a rope in the middle av all that foire an' shmoke wid the choild in yer arrums?"

"They wasn't any other way o' gettin' down, and I couldn't stay there and be burned up. That was nuthin'."

"Oh, yes, it was something, aunty," cried Gerty. "It was just awful, and Willie is a real brave, good boy, and when I grow to be a lady I'm going to marry him."

"Troth, when yer foind yer rich relations and get to be a grand leddy, mebbe it's nothin' at all ye'll have to say to a poor bootblack," said Mrs. McShane.

"He isn't going to be a bootblack and sell papers all his life, aunty, and if he did, I'd marry him for all that," stoutly maintained the child.

"Well, if I don't get away I won't sell no papers to-day, I reckon," cried Willie, and then, giving a more rakish set to his cap, he hurried away.

At the Herald office he stopped and inserted

the following advertisement, written out for him by Jordan:

"WANTED—The heirs, next of kin or other relatives of Victor Pilot, of Paris, France, killed during the Commune. Apply at No. — Frankfort street, after two o'clock."

It was thought best to receive any answers to the above at Alice's apartments, rather than at Willie's room in Mrs. McShane's, and Alice had readily given her assent to this arrangement.

Among Singleton's papers left behind in his hurried flight were proofs of the betrayal of the trust given him by Alice's father, but as Mr. Rogers had not been heard of in many years, it was scarcely deemed advisable or practicable to look for him now.

After paying for his advertisement, Willie went to the offices of the evening papers, laid in a supply and started off to sell them.

As he was crossing the park a boy of his own age, but better dressed, accosted him and said:

"Hi, Johnny, where's Nassau street about here?"

"There it is, right over there by the Times bulidin', right by the tall tower of the Tribune."

"Does it run down as far as Wall street?"

"Yes, sir, and then it's Broad after that. Goin' down into the street to speculate a little?"

"No, I'm going to a bank."

"Why, they're all shut at this time, don't you know that?"

"Oh, the boss'll be in, I guess. The man said he would, anyhow."

"You've got a particular message to give him, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"What bank did you say it was?"

The boy took a letter from his pocket, looked at it, and said:

"Singleton's Bank, 69 Wall street."

"Oh, yes; that's below Nassau street, but it ain't far from it, on the left hand side as you go down."

"Thanks," the boy said, as he went on.

"I'll bet a nickel that Frenchy hasn't heard the news yet, and that he's sendin' a note to Whiskers," muttered Willie. "That green kid'll go back and tell him he couldn't find the boss, and then I'll foller him and get right on to where Frenchy is hidin'. If it's some other feller, all right, but I'm bettin' two to one it's the Frenchman, an' I'll have him nabbed before night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW WILLIE'S CLEW TURNED OUT.

MASTER WILLIE RUFUS was an industrious young fellow, and in the course of half an hour he had sold all his papers without leaving the neighborhood of Printing House Square and the City Hall park.

At the end of the time which he thought it would take the boy to go to Wall street and back he managed to be on Park Row, close to the junction of Nassau and Spruce streets.

He had just sold his last paper when he saw the boy that had questioned him half an hour previous coming up Nassau street.

"There he is," he muttered. "Now let's see what sort o' detective I'll make. Reckon it won't be so hard followin' him as the Frenchman or Tom Barker."

The boy crossed the park, went up Broadway as far as Bleecker street, and then turned toward the North river.

"Well, I'll be blowed," muttered Willie, who had kept the boy in sight all the time. "I wonder if he's goin' to the Dutchman's, after all?"

The boy passed the saloon kept by Willie's German friend, however, and kept straight on till he reached a little alley between two houses.

Down this he turned, passing through into a court surrounded by dingy-looking tumble-down houses, inhabited mostly by French and negroes.

Willie followed cautiously, and secreting himself inside a dark doorway, watched the messenger as he ascended a low stoop and passed through an open doorway into the gloom beyond.

Willie was after him in an instant, and heard him going up-stairs, pausing on the first flight up.

He knocked at a door, and in a few minutes he heard a voice say:

"Hein, so eet ees you, my leetle friend, back again, eh? Well, what did he say, ze gentleman?"

The voice was Pierre's, beyond a doubt.

"He wasn't there at all; he's skipped," answered the boy, "run away with all the bank's money."

"Aha! you leetle fool, you ask for him. You say eet ees Pierre who want to see him, you put ze police on ze track!" hissed Pierre.

"Stop shaking me, you old fraud," Willie heard the boy say. "I didn't ask nothing. I saw the place was shut up and I heard folks talking about it, so I came away, and here's your old note, and now where's my dollar?"

"Hein! Meestaire Singletong was to gif you ze dollaire, and he ees run away."

"No, he wasn't, you was to give it to me, and I want it. Do you think I'm going to run my legs off for nothing for you and that other bum, your friend?"

"Sh! you make too moche of ze noise, my leetle friend. I only fool wiz you. Here is ze piastre. Gif me ze note."

"Gimme the dollar first," the boy said, and Willie knew that Pierre was trying to humbug him; "if you don't I'll keep the note and read it to somebody."

"Hein! You one leetle rascal!"

"And you're a big one, but you can't fool me, no matter how smart you think you are."

Then Pierre growled out something, and in a few moments Willie heard the boy coming down-stairs.

Our hero ran out, passed through the alley and from the other side of the street saw the boy come out, and turn in the direction of Sixth avenue.

"That's Frenchy, sure enough," he said, "and now to put Johnny Jordan on his track. Guess I'll go to the Dutchman's. He may have one of those telegraph machines in his place, and I can call a cop just when I want him."

A walk of a few minutes brought him to the saloon kept by Hans, and in he walked, finding the jolly German alone.

"Hallo, Dutchy, how goes things?"

"Och, mine leetle Willie, was dot you once? I was been so busy las' nide I don't know which end I was shtood on. Vat was dot peesness, h'm?"

"The Frenchman got me off on a wild goose chase, but I got onto him all the same. Say, have you got one o' those telegraph things in your place, what you kin call a cop or a messenger, or give a fire alarm with?"

"Nein, I don't have some use for dot. De man he want to put me in dot, but I tolt him I vassn't need a bolices, I bounce dem fellers myself, off dey got too funny."

"Suppose you want to call a messenger boy?"

"What for once?"

"Anything."

"I nefer do, I send Katrina. She was a pully girl for dot."

"She ain't no good for what I want," muttered Willie. "I want to have a cop ready to nab that Frenchman."

"De feller what come in here once a couble of times?"

"Yes."

"Hees partner was in this aafternoon already, and was look for him, dot same snoozer vot dry to took me in once, but I bounce him owit so gwick he forgot to been back once."

"Did Frenchy come in to-day?"

"Nein, I don't dink so. Dot Italian snoozer was been in und says he make me drubbles mit dot organ mit dot mongey, because I don't was pelong mit dot moosical union und blay in der streets."

"Tell him he's off his base."

"Ya, I put him off dot myself ven I trow him owit mit der street once. I was sold dot organ mit a pier garden py der next plock, und dot mongey was gone mit a menacherie down py dot Centre street, und I shook myself mit them both."

"Well, so-long, Hans; I can't stay any more chinnin' with you. Skip the gutter, Dutchy."

"That Frenchman ain't likely to go out much till night," mused Willie, as he ran off, "and I reckon I can get down-town, find Johnny Jordan, and be back here agin before dark."

It was his intention to ride down in a Sixth avenue car, but, as he was hurrying along, a man suddenly came out of a narrow alley-way and Willie ran right against him.

"Hein! you leetle stupide, where you go, h'm?" cried the man.

It was Pierre himself.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Frenchy?" cried the boy.

"I've got you now, and ye won't get away in a hurry, neither."

"Diable! let go my coat, you tear him!" cried the Frenchman, trying to wrench himself from Willie's grasp.

"Police! Stop thief!" yelled Willie, still hanging on desperately.

A crowd began to collect, and Pierre, dreading arrest, knew that he would have to resort to desperate measures to escape.

Thrusting one hand suddenly into an inside pocket of his coat, he drew a knife and made an ugly stab at the boy.

The keen blade cut away a part of Willie's coat sleeve, narrowly escaping the flesh.

"Police!" yelled Willie, striking fiercely at Pierre and closing one of his eyes.

"Let go, you little villain!" hissed the Frenchman, making another stab at Willie.

The boy saw the blow coming, and struck the brutal fellow a blow on the upper muscles of his arm, causing the knife to fall to the ground.

At this instant a policeman rushed up and separated the two combatants.

"Zis boy try to rob me and strike me in ze face," cried Pierre. "He ees one tief, one pick ze pocket. You sall arrest him zis minute."

"He lies. He's a thief hisself, and last night he ran away with a little girl, and he's the worst man in the city. He makes kids steal fur him, and he's a fence besides."

"I'll take both of you in," said the officer. "Come along, Frenchy, or I'll club you till you do."

"You cannot arrest me. I hafe done nossing," said Pierre, stoutly. "Zis boy ees a tief, and he cry 'Stoap tief' zat he may get away."

"You can arrest me if you like," cried Willie, "but Frogs is goin' too, or I'm a duffer. Doyer see this knife?" and the boy suddenly stooped and snatched the weapon from the walk.

"That's what he tried to cut me with. Look at my coat. If yer don't arrest him, I'll have yer broke."

Pierre suddenly darted away, breaking loose from the officer's grasp, but Willie was after him in an instant.

He sprang at the brute's throat and struck him in the face, when Pierre, enraged and forgetting his coolness, struck him in return and threw him to the walk.

In an instant the officer seized him, raised his club threateningly and said:

"Now you've got to come. You're both fighting in the street, and you'll have to settle it in Jefferson Market, not here."

"That suits me to a dot!" cried Willie. "I don't mind staying in the jug all night, so long as I've got Frenchy caged, and his time won't be up in the morning, you bet."

CHAPTER XXV.

FOR the first time in his life Willie Rufus found himself locked up in a cell in a police station.

This fact caused him no uneasiness, however, for he had succeeded in capturing Pierre Bertrand, and knew that his own release would come in the morning.

In fact, it came sooner than that.

Detective Jordan, happening to be at police headquarters that night, as was often the case, saw by the returns from the different precincts that Pierre Bertrand and a boy, calling himself Willie Rufus, had been arrested for fighting in the street.

"Hallo, Pierre Bertrand arrested!" he cried. "That's good. I'll bet that's Willie's work, and that he had himself arrested, as well, in order that Pierre might not escape."

Then he hurried over to the Charles street station, and asked permission of the sergeant in charge to see the boy called Willie Rufus.

"Do you know him, Mr. Jordan?" asked the sergeant.

"Very well indeed."

"It's a queer case. The boy charges the man with abducting, and with attempting the life of a child, and of being a regular Fagin besides."

"He is right enough," said Jordan, "and there are plenty other charges that we can bring against this rascal Bertrand. May I see the boy?"

"Certainly; Johnson, bring that boy up here, won't you? He has a cell to himself."

The man went away, and in a few minutes Willie came into the room.

"Hallo, Johnny," he cried, greeting the detective most cordially. "I wanted to get the news to yer somehow, but I was 'traid it couldn't be done till mornin'."

"So you've captured the Frenchman, have you?"

"Yes, siree, and I wouldn't mind stayin' here, all night a bit fur that."

"You won't have to do that, Willie. Sergeant, I'll be responsible for this boy's appearance, or will go his bail, if that is necessary."

"The Frenchman charges him with trying to pick his pocket."

"That's all my eye," laughed Willie. "He didn't want ter come here at all, an' if the cop hadn't run us both in, yer wouldn't 've seen a sign of Frenchy in the morning."

"How did you manage it?" asked Jordan.

Willie then related the happenings of the previous twenty-four hours, including Gerty's abduction, the shadowing of Pierre, the fire, the rescue, and this last capture.

"You can go, bub," said the sergeant, when Willie had finished. "I'm satisfied that you are no thief. You must be in court in the morning, though."

"Well, yer can bet yer boots I will," said

Willie, resolutely. "I wouldn't miss the chance of sendin' Frenchy up river fur nuthin'. If Whiskers hadn't skipped, I'd done the same for him, too. You bet. I've had it in fur both of them fur a long time."

Our hero then went away with Jordan, and both returned to Mrs. McShane's, Willie, so that the kind apple woman and Gertie need not be unnecessarily alarmed at his long absence, and Jordan, in order to see that nothing happened to his charge during the night.

Jordan slept in the room with Willie, who wanted to give up his bed to the detective, and the first thing in the morning they both went to Jefferson Market.

After several cases had been disposed of Pierre was brought up, and accused Willie of having robbed and then assaulted him, on Bleecker street, the night before.

Jordan then stepped forward with Willie, told what he knew of Pierre, and then said:

"Your Honor, I would advise you to pay particular attention to this boy's story. He was the principal witness against Herbert Singleton, the absconding banker, in the trial of the latter's charge against Harry James, his confidential clerk."

"Proceed!" said the judge, and then Willie told his story, straightforward and directly to the point.

Pierre endeavored to interrupt him more than once, but he was silenced, and Willie continued to the end.

"Do you swear that what you have told the court is the truth?" asked the judge.

"Yes, siree," said Willie, firmly. "There isn't a lie in the whole business, and Frenchy knows it."

Willie was then sworn, his testimony read to and sworn to by him, Jordan corroborating many of its points.

"The prisoner, Pierre Bertrand, is committed for trial in default of ten thousand dollars bail. Willie Rufus is discharged."

Pierre raved like a madman, and vowed that he would have the boy's life for all this, but the officers silenced him, and he was led away to await his trial.

Willie and Jordan then left the court, but had proceeded but a short distance when they perceived a crowd approaching.

"Hallo! what's the row there?" cried Willie. "Guess some bloke is gettin' arrested. Let's see the fun."

"That's too common a sight with me," said Jordan. "It is an every-day occurrence."

"Oh, I say, Johnny," cried Willie, presently, "there's that Dutchman, Hans Schneiderkopf, the feller what had the trouble with the monk, you know, down at the Tombs."

"Your friend Hans?"

"Yes, that's him."

"Ah, yes, I see him now. What has he been doing now, do you suppose?"

"It ain't him; it's— Well, I'll be blowed!"

With that, Willie suddenly darted forward, leaving Jordan standing alone.

The boy presently reached the crowd, and pushing the boys and men aside, paused in front of Hans, who was the central figure of the group.

"Hallo, Hans, you've got him, have you?" he cried.

Hans, by the way, had hold of Tom Barker by the collar, and was dragging him along despite the rascal's protestations.

"Ach! dot was you, h'm, leetle Willie, was it?" cried Hans. "Ya, I catch me dot snoozer pigging bockets by my saloon, und I mage a bollees off myselluf, und I was dake him mit dot Chef-ferson Marget right away quick."

"Lemme go, you Dutch sausage," growled Tom Barker, trying to free himself. "You ain't a cop, and yer can't run a feller in like that, in a free country."

"What was he doing, Hans?" asked Willie.

"Pigging bockets, I tolt you. Katrina, she sawn him once und tolt me. Once I bounce him owit already, but dis time I pring him right away up by dot Court House, und den he don'd rob peoples some more, ain't it?"

"Yer can't do it, I tell yer," snarled Tom, striking at Hans. "You ain't a detective."

"No, but I am," said a voice, and Jordan forced his way through the crowd.

"Bully for you, Johnny, run him in," cried Willie. "Him and Pierre is all in the same boat."

"You young imp, I'll get even with you," hissed Barker.

"You'll take a trip up the river with yer French friend, Monshoo Pierre Bertrand, that's what yer'll do," retorted Willie. "Pierre is all right, and so will you be, Mr. Tom, before long."

"Come with me, Mr. Barker," said Jordan,

putting his hand on the villain's shoulder. "There are several charges you must answer to, my tough friend."

"I'll support the old woman if ye'll lemme go," whined Tom, who had lost all his bluster now that an actual officer of the law had him in his clutches.

"There are graver charges against you than refusing to support your wife, friend Tom," said Jordan, "so get on with you."

"Ya, I dinks so myselluf," said Hans. "Pigging bockets off drunken men was just so pad like stealing a sheep, und you could been hang-ed fur dot py Chermany, already."

Jordan now marched Mr. Tom Barker off, and Hans and Willie followed.

There were charges enough against the fellow to warrant his being held, and as he could not furnish bail he was locked up to await trial at a later day.

"You're a brick, Dutchy, a first-class, tip top, A No. 1 brick," said Willie, when the business had been completed and all three passed into the street.

"Ya, I dinks so myselluf, ain't it," said Hans, complacently. "I don't was had some foolishness py my saloon once, und I know dot Tom Barker for a sagger, already, und so I yust took dot bull by de dail und make off myselluf a special detective, don't it?"

"Yer done first rate, Dutchy, and you kin tell Katrina that when I see her I'll kiss her for her father."

"Ach! you vas one big mesher, I dinks, mien leetle Willie," roared Hans. "Ebery day dot gal ax me where you been und off you don'd was coming to see her some more, already yet. I dinks you preaks dot gal's heart, off you gone away und marry some one else."

"Tell Katrina to look somewhere else," laughed Jordan, "for Willie is already engaged, the gay deceiver."

"Ach! tuyfel, den she go trown herselluf by dot beer kaig, und choke herselluf mit a bretzel," cried Hans, evidently very much amused. "Vell, what you say? I dreat you once off you come down by dot saloon off mine, und den you saw Katrina once besides, ain't it?"

"Much obliged, Hans, but I can't spare the time," said Jordan.

"I'll go," said Willie, "but I've got to be down to Miss Alice's by two o'clock, so's to see anybody what comes to talk about Gerty."

Hans and Willie went one way, and Jordan another, our hero promising to see the detective as soon as the trials of Pierre and Tom were put on the calendar.

The saucy young fellow spent an hour or two very pleasantly with Hans and his pretty daughter, and then hurried off down-town, reaching Frankfort street just as the clock of the City Hall indicated the hour of two.

As he reached the house where Alice lived he saw a pleasant-looking old gentleman standing in the doorway, looking at a newspaper cutting he held in his hand.

"Well, I'll be blowed if it ain't his honor," cried Willie. "Good-mornin', judge. How do you find yourself?"

The old gentleman smiled, looked puzzled, and then a look of recognition coming into his face, said:

"Aha, this is my young friend, Willie Rufus, is it not, who testified so clearly, the other day, in the Singleton case?"

"I'm the same feller, judge. Did you come to call on me?"

"I came to answer this advertisement," and the old gentleman placed the newspaper slip in Willie's hand.

"Oh, that's all right. I'm the party what put that in the paper. Come right up-stairs. I reckon they're waitin' for yer now."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WAIFS FIND A HOME AT LAST.

ALICE, Gerty and Mrs. McShane were all seated in the cozy sitting-room of Alice's quarters, when Willie and the judge entered.

"Allow me to introduce my friend, Judge— Judge—"

"Rogers," said the old gentleman.

Alice started with surprise, while Willie went on with his introductions.

"Judge Rogers, ladies. Yer honor, this is Miss Alice, the young lady what Whiskers—that's Singleton—ran off with. The old woman with the fly-away cap an' the green ribbons is Missis Mac, the lady what owns the hotel where I live. The little girl is my sweetheart, the daughter of Victor Pilot, of Paris."

"And my niece," said Judge Rogers.

"Your niece?" said Willie. "Then if I marry her you'll be my uncle."

"To be sure," said the judge, smiling.

"Sure, ye're not axing the gentleman to take a chair, Willie," whispered Mrs. MacShane.

"Oh, so I ain't. You couldn't tell some of your neighbors to do that, missis. They'd take the chairs and everything else. Sit down, judge, and we'll hear all about it."

"My sister," continued Judge Rogers, taking a seat, and putting his hat on a table, "was the wife of Victor Pilot, of Paris, killed at the time of the commune."

"Did she have a little girl?"

"Yes, one named Gertrude, after herself. She died before Pilot did, and in her last letters to me, shortly before her death, charged me to look after her child."

"Then came her death, the commune, the death of Pilot, and the disappearance of the child, all traces of her being lost."

"There ain't no mistake about it, judge," said Willie. "Pierre Bertrand took the girl and fetched her over here. I heard him tell Singleton that she was Victor Pilot's child my own self."

"Singleton!" muttered the judge. "He is the scoundrel who betrayed my trust and left my poor children to starve and die! Oh, the monster!"

"Sir," cried Alice, starting to her feet, "look at me and see if you don't see some resemblance to one who—"

"Alice, my wife, lives again in that face!" cried the judge, nervously. "Tell me, my dear young lady, your name is not Baldwin, is it?"

"No; it is Alice Rogers, and you are my father. Herbert Singleton betrayed your trust, and left me and my little brother to face the world alone. I found kind friends, but my poor brother died years ago."

"I knew I could not be mistaken. You are indeed my child."

"Your face, your voice impressed me greatly the day of the trial, and now, when I heard your name, I was certain that you were my father."

"I was puzzled then myself," said the judge. "I recognized Singleton, and that took all my thoughts. The villain knew that the case was against him the moment he saw me, and it needed only the testimony of my young friend here to break him down completely."

"I gave him some bang-up, knock down arguments—didn't I, your honor?" said Willie.

"You did, indeed," replied Judge Rogers, with a smile. "I had a son once—Alice's younger brother—whom I had hoped to make a good lawyer of once."

"Yes, but he must be dead," said Alice. "I never could find the slightest trace of him."

"He may not be," said the judge. "I thought you dead, but you reappeared, and why might not he?"

"Sure ye wouldn't know him if he did," said Mrs. McShane, "seein' as how he wor only a child whin ye lost 'um."

"Oh, yes, he could be identified, my good woman," interposed the judge, "for on his right arm, between the shoulder and the elbow, are the letters 'W. R.' in India ink."

"W. R.," echoed all.

"Then I'm the identical 'W. R.," cried Willie, springing up and throwing off his coat.

"You are?" cried every one.

"I are!" and in a moment up went Willie's shirt-sleeve, and there, on the fleshy part of his right arm, between the shoulder and the elbow, were the two letters, "W. R.," as plain as need be.

"Yes, siree, that's me, W. R., Willie Rufus, Esquire, son of Judge Rogers, His Honor. Who says I'm a waif, now, I'd like to know."

"Oh, you dear Willie, then you're my brother after all, and I can kiss you as much as I like."

With that Alice threw her arms around Willie's neck and kissed him more than once.

"Hallo, hallo! aren't you taking liberties?" cried a pleasant voice, and as all turned Harry James was seen in the open doorway. "I knocked three or four times, but you seem to have been too much engaged to hear me."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Willie. "Well, you needn't get jealous. A feller can kiss his own sister, can't he?"

"Your sister?" cried Harry, in surprise.

"Yes, sir, my sister. Guess I've got a right to have a sister, haven't I? Other fellers have sisters. You can kiss her, though, if you like. I don't mind."

"Alice, what does this mean?" cried Harry. "Is Willie indeed your brother?"

"Yes, Harry dear, and here is my father," turning toward the judge.

"Why, this is the judge who tried my case the other day, in the Tombs."

"That's His Honor, Judge Rogers, my father," said Willie. "Ain't you 'fraid that Alice'll give yer the shake, now that she's found her pa?"

"Oh, Willie, you dreadful boy," cried Alice.

"What have you got your coat off and your sleeve up for, Willie?" asked Harry. "Were you going to fight?"

"No, siree, I was just showing his nibbs here, ahem! I musn't say that, His Honor, my father, the letters on my arm. I ain't going to be a waif no longer. I'm William Rogers, Esquire, and I'm one of the nobbs."

"Why, yes, indeed, Alice, you told me yourself that your name was Rogers. Now that you have found your father, you will perhaps—"

"Harry!" cried Alice, rapturously, throwing her arms about her lover's neck, "I am yours always, no matter what changes may come."

"Hooray!" cried Willie, who had resumed his coat. "Take her, my boy, and God bless you both. Kiss her, Harry, I don't mind. Come here, little sweetheart," to Gerty.

"Oh, Willie!" said the child, sitting on the boy's knee and holding his hand.

"What's the row now, little 'un?"

"Why if Mr. Judge Rogers is your father and my uncle, then you and I must be cousins."

"Right you are," cried Willie; "we are cousins, tight enough, for a fact. Don't you be afraid, though. There's nothin' again' a feller marryin' his cousin, and when you get big enough we'll be married in Trinity Church, and have the swellest weddin' you ever see, you bet."

"Then you will not forget me, dearest?" asked

Harry; "thought you are now rich, while I am still poor."

"Forget you, Harry, leave you?" cried Alice.

"Never!"

"That's right, my child," said that incorrigible Willie, "never go back on a man because he wears a linen duster. Bless you, my children."

"Begorrah, who's goin' to care fur me whin both the childer are gon'?" cried Mrs. McShane.

"Faix, I feel as av I wur more av a widdy than iver."

"Oh, we'll come and see you every day, Missus Mac," said Willie, "and mebbe some day a rich uncle of yours in Ireland will die and leave yer a fortune."

"Sorrah fear of it," remarked the apple woman. "It's more likely he'll be axin' me fur money to bring himself over here."

At last, when the stories were all told, and the explanations made a dozen times or more, the happy party broke up only to appoint a meeting for the morrow.

Alice gave up her quarters in the old house in Frankfort street, and the tenants missed her greatly.

Willie left Mrs. McShane, and went to live with his father and Alice in an elegant mansion uptown which the judge now rented.

Gerty went with them, of course, and Mrs. McShane was persuaded to give up her apple-stand,

move to Judge Rogers', put on a white cap and apron and be the child's nurse.

Pierre Bertrand and Tom Barker were both sent to Sing Sing—Pierre for twenty years and Tom for twelve—and the community was well rid of them when they left New York and went up the river.

Singleton never returned to New York, but went over to France, where he died some ten years after his flight in the greatest poverty.

The greater part of the money that he had stolen from Judge Rogers was never recovered, but as the judge had recovered his lost children the loss of the money did not trouble him.

Harry and Alice were married a few months after the reunion, and to-day Harry James is at the head of one of the largest private banking concerns in the city, and is universally respected.

John Jordan, the clever detective, Willie's friend, is still on the force, and is as shrewd as ever, having been concerned in several clever captures which not only reflected great credit upon his skill as a detective, but added to his fortune as well.

Willie Rufus kept his word and married Gerty some ten years later, being now a rising young lawyer with a good practice, a loving wife and a family of jolly youngsters, none of whom are in any danger of becoming, like their father and mother, WAIFS OF NEW YORK.

[THE END.]

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